Anecdota Oxoniensia

THE
LETTERS OF ABU 'L-'ALĀ
OF
MA'ARRAT AL-NU'MĀN

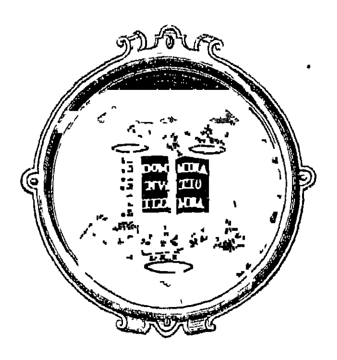
EDITED FROM THE LEYDEN MANUSCRIPT, WITH THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR BY AL-DHAHABI

AND WITH

TRANSLATION, NOTES, INDICES, AND BIOGRAPI

BY

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Oxford
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS
1898

HENRY FROWDE, M.A

PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



LONDON, EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK

CONTENTS.

PREFACE.

THE present edition of the Letters of Abu 'l-'Alā was undertaken several years ago, when the editor, impressed by the high estimate formed of Abu 'l-'Alā by Von Kremer[1], thought that many Arabists would be glad to have access to the poet's correspondence. Through the kindness of the eminent Orientalist, Prof M. De Goeje, the Leyden MS. was twice deposited in the Bodleian Library for a period of

[1] Von Kremer speaks of Abu 'l-'Alā at length in his *Kulturgeschichte* (1877), II 386–396, and in his *Abhandlung uber die philosophischen Gedichte des Abu 'l-'Alā* (*Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Wien, Hist-phil Klasse*, vol CXVII, 6te Abhandlung, 1889) He also translated many poems from the Luzūmiyyāt at different times *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenlandischen Gesellschaft*, XXIX 304–312, XXX 40–52, XXXI 471–483, XXXVIII 498–529, *Sitzungsberichte*, as above, XCIII 636–640 Of other writers who have dealt with Abu 'l-'Alā the first place must be assigned to Ch Rieu, *De Abu 'l-'Alae poetae vita et carminibus*, Bonn, 1843 Poems from the Sakt al-Zand have been translated by Fabricius (Dantzig, 1638), Golius (in Erpenius' *Arabic Grammar*, 1656), De Sacy (*Chrestomathie Arabe*, 2nd ed, 1827, III 81–121), J Vullers (*Harethi Moallaca et Abulolae carmina duo inedita*, 1827) Poems from both collections are translated by Von Hammer in his *Literaturgeschichte der Araber*, VI 900–972 Attention was first called to the poet in this country by Pococke, *Specimen Historiae Arabum*, p 42, the notice by Abu 'l-Fidā, *Annales*, ed. Reiske, III 163–165, has been frequently excerpted, e g by Weil, *Geschichte der Khalifen*, III 72 A highly interesting note was contributed by I Goldziher to vol XXIX of the *Z D M G*, and the same writer in his *Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie* (1896) quotes the Letters Those who feel pleasure in correcting errors would find ample opportunity in many of these works even De Sacy translates رهن المحبسين 'Gage des Prisonniers,' and Von Kremer, *S B* CXVII 91, makes the astounding assertion that 'none of Abu 'l-'Alā's biographers know of such a work as *Al-Fuṣūl wal-Ghāyāt*, that it is nowhere quoted, and must be another name for the *Luzūmiyyāt*,' although Goldziher, l c, in an article dealing with Von Kremer's translations, had produced a passage from the book in question

weeks for the editor's use In 1894 however, when most of the text was already in type, there appeared at Beyrut an edition of the Letters, fully pointed and accompanied by a brief commentary, the work of Shāhīn Effendi 'Aṭiyyah, clearly a most competent scholar, whose book might seem to render a European edition unnecessary The present work was however continued on the following grounds (1) although the Beyrut editor's MS is occasionally better than the Leyden MS., it has a large lacuna, all the Letters occupying pp 38–55 of the present edition being lost; (2) although the Beyrut editor's commentary is deserving of praise, it nevertheless leaves much that is difficult unexplained; (3) the addition of a translation and indices will, perhaps, render the book more accessible to those interested in the East than the Beyrut edition has rendered it

For the text then I have employed the Warner MS described in the Catalogue of the Leyden Library (2nd ed., pp 190–193), with occasional corrections from the Beyrut edition, some of these will be found in an Appendix The whole of Letter II is to be found in the *Tadhkirah* of Ibn Hamdūn (ob circ 562 A. H., MS Marsh. 316), and in the *Ṣubh Al-A'shā* of Al-Ḳalḳashandi (ob. 821, MS Marsh 317); since Kalkashandi was acquainted with Ibn Ḥamdūn's work, it is probable that the former got his copy from the latter. but from both these MSS a little help can be derived. Al-Bākharzi, the author of a continuation of the *Yatīmat al-Dahr*, of which there is a copy in the British Museum, makes a reference to the same letter, but does not cite any of it. These are the only writers, (other than bibliographers,) known to me[1], who were acquainted with this collec-

[1] Von Hammer, l c 906, states that a work in the Leyden Library, called *Jamharat al-Islām*, contains a letter by Abu 'l-'Alā occupying eight folios, and quoting thirty-six poets The list of names (many seriously mutilated) which Von Hammer proceeds to give, makes it probable that this is Letter XXVII The account of this work given in the new edition of the Leyden Catalogue shows that it contains much that bears on our author Hajji Khalifah's notice of the Letters is clearly taken from Al-Dhahabi

tion, Kamāl al-dīn Ibn Al-'Adīm (ob. 666), whose History of Aleppo is preserved in the Paris MS. excerpted by Freytag in his *Selecta ex Historia Halebi*, and who not only studied the antiquities of Aleppo and its neighbourhood with great diligence, but is said to have composed a biography of Abu 'l-'Alā, though he goes out of his way to mention the occasions on which some of Abu 'l-'Alā's Letters were composed, and displays great interest in his personality, tells us nothing about the Letters in this collection; and I have found no allusion to them in the writings of Ibn Ḥujjah of Hamath (ob 837), who otherwise shows considerable acquaintance with Abu 'l-'Alā's works, and, of course, is greatly interested in elegant epistles. His contemporary and friend Ibn Nubātah (ob 823) does not appear to have known them either.

The interpretation is constantly a matter of considerable difficulty, and the handbook which the author compiled in elucidation of his Letters would be of great help In parts they are a tissue of quotations and allusions. Where the sources of these are known, the meaning can be made out with tolerable certainty. elsewhere there is great danger of falling into error. And, as the author was blind and unable to verify his references, his quotations frequently contain some inaccuracy, and it may be suspected that some of the passages in which the difficulty seems insuperable owe their character to slips of memory on the author's part He tells us[1], too, that owing to his pronunciation some of the sounds would be likely to be misrepresented by those to whom he dictated, and of this the Beyrut and Leyden texts offer examples.

Many pages will illustrate the difficulty that has been noticed; one example may be quoted here. On p. ٣٦, 9, speaking of his affection for his correspondent, the author says. بدكّرى لاوقاته تدكّر العطم ثدى الوالده . والمعسم بالملح لسى حالده The first part, 'I think of his times as

[1] Letter XXXVI, p 139

the weaned child thinks of its mother's breast,' is taken from a line of Abu 'l-Hindi quoted in the *Kāmil* of Mubarrad (Egyptian ed. II. 42).—

اديِرَا عليّ الكأس انّي فقدتها * كما فقد المفطوم درّ المراضع

As however it contains no difficulty, the source has not been cited. The remainder of the passage could never be made out without the help of the source whence it is taken, a line quoted in the same work (Eg. I 295. Wright, p. 284) as 'the poet's'—

لا يبعد الله ربّ العبا -- * د والمِلْحِ ما وَلَدَتْ خَالدةْ

'May God, Lord of men, by the milk, not remove the children of Khālidah[1],' the line being quoted to show that *milh* sometimes means 'milk' or the collactaneous relation, which, for some purposes, counts in Mohammedan law as equal to consanguinity.

In this and similar cases those whose opinion is worth having are by no means likely to condemn the rendering before they have investigated its ground.

The original being in rhymed prose, to which the sense is often sacrificed, there is much in the translation that will necessarily seem pointless or insipid. No attempt has been made to reproduce the rhyme of the original, rhymed prose not being with us a recognized form of composition, but occasionally English proverbs or plays on words have been substituted for those in the text.

To the Letters there is appended the Life of Abu 'l-'Alā by Al-Dhahabi, which is more copious than that by Ibn Khallikan, and also follows different sources; it is taken from the copy of Al-Dhahabi's

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[1] We also learn that Abu 'l-'Alā (rightly or wrongly) read *walmilhi*, not, as the printed editions, *walmilhu*. The passage whence the verse comes is given in Khizānat al-adab IV 164, where the opinions of the ancient critics about its authorship and meaning are stated. The wish implies that the 'children of Khālidah' were dead (note on Hamāsah, p 405). The verse is also quoted by Sheikho, *Commentaires sur le Dīwān d'Al-Khansā*, p 31, pointed as above.

History of Islam in the British Museum The Biography which follows this Preface has been compiled from it and also from such other works bearing on the subject as were within the author's reach. One of these is the Biography[1] prefixed to the Boulāḳ edition of the commentary on the *Sakt al-Zand* called *Tanwīr;* the author of which seems to have drawn his bow at a venture when he refers the reader to the *Yatīmat al-Dahr* for further information, for not only do the printed copies of the *Yatīmah* say nothing of Abu 'l-ʿAlā, but the existence of a notice of the poet in Bākharzi's supplement shows that there never was one in the *Yatīmah.* Bākharzi is however nearly as much inferior to Thaʿālibi as the latter is inferior to the author of the *Aghāni* The Biography by Ṣafadi[2] contains some of the same matter as the others, but preserves some valuable notices which are not found elsewhere The list of Abu 'l-ʿAlā's writings appended to Al-Dhahabi's Biography gives it special value. It will not escape the reader however that there is a discrepancy between the number of titles given and the number which Abu 'l-ʿAlā asserted that they reached. The discrepancies between this list and Ṣafadi's are collected in the Appendix.

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[1] The information given by this writer is similar to that quoted by Goldziher, l. c, from a Leipsic MS

[2] In the Bodleian MS (Seld Arch A 21) The text of this volume is exceedingly corrupt, but can often be restored from other sources

CHIEF ABBREVIATIONS, ETC.

F W. = *Fawāt al-wafayāt.*

Ibn Khall. = Ibn Khallikan (cited by the edition of Boulāk, 1299)

Luz. = *Luzūmiyyāt* of Abu 'l-‘Alā (rhymes up to ز cited by the edition of Cairo, 1891; the rest by the edition of Bombay, 1303)

S Z. = *Saḳt al-Zand* of Abu 'l-‘Alā (cited by the edition of Boulāk, 1286).

Maydāni's 'Proverbs' are ordinarily cited by the pages of the edition of Beyrut, 1312, called فرائد اللآل فى مجمع الامثال. For Ibn Al-Athīr and Mas‘ūdi's *Murūj al-dhahab* the edition of Boulāk, 1303, has been employed, for Ibn Kutaibah's *Kitāb al-ma‘ārif* that of Cairo, 1300; and for Damīri and Kazwīni that of Cairo, 1309.

L A. = *Lisān al-‘Arab*

T. A = *Tāj al-‘Arūs.*

The sign of prolongation is sometimes omitted in the transliterations of proper names

BIOGRAPHY

OF

ABU 'L-'ALĀ AL-MA'ARRI.

Abu 'l-'Alā[1] Ahmad son of Abdallah son of Sulaiman was born at Ma'arrat Al-Nu'mān in Syria in the year 363 A H, corresponding with the year 973 A. D Ma'arrah, called by European travellers[2] Marrah, is a town somewhat South of Aleppo or Ḥaleb, at a distance of one day's (or more accurately, nineteen hours') journey. Originally, it is said, it was called Ma'arrah of Ḥumṣ, but after the conquest of Syria by the Moslems it was called Ma'arrah of Nu'mān, after Nu'mān son of Bashīr[3], who was governor of Ḥums for the Umayyad Caliph Marwān Ibn Al-Ḥakam, and one of whose sons died and was buried at Ma'arrah. Such, at least, is the account of the name given by Al-Balādhuri[4]; but some of the authorities[5] are not satisfied with it, and suggest other and less probable explanations The second part of the name was in any case given the town in order to distinguish it from another Ma'arrah, also in this region, and called Ma'arrat

[1] The custom of giving *kunyahs* to persons who had no children is too familiar to need illustration An earlier Abu 'l-'Alā of Ma'arrah is mentioned in Aghāni XII 8; and an Abu 'l-'Alā of Tanūkh, Aghāni VII 86 Another Abu 'l 'Alā related to Abu 'l-Hasan 'Alī Ibn Ja'far is mentioned by Bākharzi among the poets of Ma'arrah

[2] So R Pococke, Walpole, and others

[3] A long and interesting account of this person, who was famous as a poet as well as a statesman, is given in Aghāni XIV. 119 sqq

[4] Ed De Goeje, p. 131

[5] So Yākūt, s v It would seem more probable that Al-Nu'mān was the name of a god

Maṣrīn. Of the first part of the name the geographers give a variety of derivations, to which our author adds a humorous one[1]; but it is doubtless the Syriac M'ʿartā, 'a cave[2],' to which Maghārah would etymologically correspond in Arabic The province in which it was situated was called in Abu 'l-ʿAlā's time ʿAwāṣim or 'the Forts[3],' a name which, according to some authorities, denoted a very vast expanse of territory, while others limit it to the region between Ḥaleb and Hamath; and others, again, expressly exclude these districts from it In our author's time it was subject to the governor of Haleb The whole region seems to have been peopled from pre-Islamic days by the tribe Tanūkh, whose migrations form an interesting chapter in the mythology of the Arabs[4]; and the range of mountains drained by the Orontes, which further south becomes the Lebanon, was called after their name[5]. Maʿarrah, in particular[6], was said to be inhabited by families descended from this tribe, and from such a family our author claimed to be descended.

The account repeatedly given by Abu 'l-ʿAlā of both the physical and intellectual condition of his native town[7] is lugubrious, but it is not confirmed by other writers, save in the one detail of its being destitute of running water Ibn Ḥaukal, who died about the time when Abu 'l-ʿAlā was born, speaks of Maʿarrah as 'a rich and pros-

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[1] Infra, p 61 [2] In Joshua xiii 4 M'ʿārah of the Sidonians is the name of a city

[3] Abu 'l-ʿAlā uses this name so frequently that there can be no question that in his time Maʿarrah belonged to ʿAwāsim In S Z II 43 he wishes for a drop of the water of Maʿarrah, and in the same poem (p 46) pines for the land of ʿAwāsim Ibn Khallikan (I 445) argues the same from S Z II 53, and from I 25 it appears that Haleb was in ʿAwāsim also The commentator on I 25 and I 87 limits the region as above Tabari however (III 604, cited by Ibn Khallikan) states that Hārūn Al-Rashīd in 170 turned Kinnesrīn and Al-Jazīrah into a single province called ʿAwāsim Of the geographers, Istakhri (*Bibl Geogr Arab* I 61), Ibn Haukal (ibid II 118), and Mukaddasi (ibid III 154) place Maʿarrah in Jund Kinnesrīn, while Yaʿkūbi (ibid. VII. 324) and Masʿūdi (ibid VIII 153) place it in the Jund Ḥums Clearly Abu 'l-ʿAlā's opinion is worth more than all these. Ibn Kādi Shuhbah in his description of Haleb (Brit Mus MS, p 7) states that Hamath used to be 'attached' to Haleb, and Maʿarrah to Hamath

[4] Aghāni XI 161, Al-Bekri, preface (translated by Wustenfeld in his *Wanderungen der Arabischen Stämme*)

[5] Istakhri, p 56

[6] Yaʿkūbi, l c The double title Al-Maʿarri Al-Tanūkhi is given to several poets noticed in the Fawāt al-wafayāt

[7] Infra, pp. 8, 62, 67 S Z I 145 is yet worse

perous town, well supplied with figs, pistachios, grapes, and other produce[1],' and Ibn Batūtah, who visited it in the eighth century of the Hijrah, gives an account that is scarcely less favourable[2] Although the population is now small, modern writers[3] still speak of the region as fertile and well cultivated. What is known of the people of Maʿarrah would also lead us to rate their intellectual capacity higher than Abu 'l-ʿAlā rates it The tribe of Tanūkh, like that of Hudhail, had a store of tribal lays[4], and in the third century A H. the people of Maʿarrah on Abu Tammām's recommendation gave the poet Buḥturī a salary of 1,000 dirhems for praising them, this being the first money he earned by his verses[5] Although our author was the writer of Maʿarrah who achieved the greatest distinction, the number of poets taking their name from this place who figure in the biographical dictionaries is quite out of proportion to its political importance[6].

The author's family on the father's side is said to have produced many persons of distinction both before and after his time[7]. His grandfather is said to have been Kādi of Maʿarrah, and afterwards of Humṣ. His father was a poet of some note, of no ordinary merit,

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[1] Ibn Haukal (*Bibl Geogr Arab* II) 118

[2] Ed Defrémery, I 144 Some of the geographers speak of it as in ruins (Ya'kūbi, l c), but this can have been only temporary, Ibn Kādi Shuhbah, l c , p 177, says its walls were destroyed by Abdallah Ibn Tāhir in 207, when sent by Ma'mūn against Nasr Ya'kūbi's notice probably refers to this event.

[3] Seetzen, *Reisen* I 8 , Walpole, *Ansayrii* I 194 (1851)

[4] S Z II 112 It was called the Dīwān of Taim Allāt, ibid 120 ult A grandson of Al-Kādi Al-Tanūkhi lent it to Abu 'l-ʿAlā when in Baghdad the latter, on leaving Baghdad, left it with his friend 'Abd Al-Salām, but in spite of numerous inquiries he could not trace it even after twenty years (S Z II 140) Safadi, in the notice of 'Abd Al-Sālam, says he used to give books to beggars

[5] Aghāni XVIII 169.

[6] To the notices in Dhahabi there should be added those in Bākharzi, the Fawāt al-wafayāt, and Ibn Al-'Adīm's dictionary Abu 'l-Hasan Ahmad Ibn Al-Duwaidah is mentioned by Ibn Khallikan (II 14) as a distinguished poet in the year 460 Others were Abu Mohammed Al-Adib, Abu Munajjim Ibn Mus'ir, Abu 'l-Kāsim Ibn Jalabāt (an older contemporary of Abu 'l-ʿAlā), Abu 'l-Kāsim Al-Mukri (a younger contemporary), Abu Nasr of the family of 'Amr Ibn Sa'īd Ibn Al-Mutahhar, a poet called Ghurāb, &c

[7] Safadi, f 62 a Lists of these were drawn up by Ibn Al-'Adīm and Yākūt in his Mu'jam al-Udabā.

if the dirge in which he is lamented is to be believed[1] He would seem to have died when Abu 'l-'Alā was young. From the poem that has been quoted he appears to have been a modest and retiring man—indeed it quaintly suggests that on the Day of Judgement he would try to avoid the crush. One of his brothers survived till the days of Sāliḥ Ibn Mirdās (about 420), if any reliance may be placed on an otherwise apocryphal anecdote[2].

We have one prose lament[3] and two verse laments[4] by Abu 'l-'Alā over his mother, who survived till his thirty-seventh year. She belonged to the family of Sabīkah, some members of which would seem to have filled posts of importance in Syrian towns, but although we learn that one of them was resident in Damascus[5] and another in Ḥaleb[6], the contemporary chronicles of those cities apparently do not notice their existence. They were great travellers, if the poem[7] addressed to one of them do not exaggerate, and the relation between Abu 'l-'Alā and his maternal uncles appears from the letters to have been exceedingly close and affectionate.

Both these families would seem to have entertained to some extent those liberal opinions in religious matters for which the author became notorious In a poem written by him late in life[8], he represents himself as being upbraided for having neglected the pilgrimage, one of the essential duties of a Moslem; and his answer is that neither his father nor his cousin nor his maternal uncle had performed it. If, he argues, they are forgiven, he may expect forgiveness too, if they are lost in consequence, he would sooner share their fate

At an early age—the biographers say, at the beginning of the year 977 367, when Abu 'l-'Alā was three-and-a-half years old[9]—he had an attack of small-pox, which not only left his face scarred, but caused the complete loss of the sight of his left eye, and the partial loss of that of the right How long he retained any sort of vision is not certain, the frequent references in his writings to stars, flowers, and

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[1] S Z I 193
[2] Safadi, f 67 a
[3] Letter VII.
[4] S Z II. 87, 137
[5] Infra p 131
[6] Infra, pp 35, 36
[7] S Z I 165-167, 'Have you made Alexander the Great your model?' Cp infra, pp 48-51
[8] Quoted by Safadi, f 67 a
[9] Infra, p ۱۲۹ Cp Ibn Khallikan I. 41

the forms of the Arabic letters[1] imply that he could see a little at least some years after this calamity, and of this there is some external evidence[2]; but it is not probable that he obtained much, or indeed any, of his learning by reading. As a sort of compensation for the loss of his sight he was gifted with a prodigious memory, of which tales, not to be taken as literally true, are told by his contemporaries, which, even after allowance has been made for exaggeration, give evidence of extraordinary retentiveness. His pupil Abu Zakariyyā of Tabrīz asserted that a conversation between himself and one of his countrymen in the dialect of Adherbaijan was repeated verbatim by Abu 'l-ʿAlā, though ignorant of the dialect[3]; and similar tales are told by others[4]. The letters, which abound in quotations, enable us to gauge the power of his memory better than these wonder-loving narrators. His acquaintance with the literature of his nation was certainly great, but it was wanting in accuracy. Those who study his quotations will perceive that he could no more than others less gifted afford to leave his references unverified.

From his twentieth year, he tells one of his correspondents[5], he had sought neither instruction nor money from any inhabitant of Syria or ʿIrāḳ. His life therefore falls into three periods: that of his youthful studies, which terminated in 383; his life in Maʿarrah ending with his visit to Baghdad, which lasted from 398 to 400; and his seclusion in Maʿarrah, which lasted from his return from Baghdad to his death.

993
1008
1010

His first instruction, we are told, was from his father; he also studied tradition in Maʿarrah under Yahyā Ibn Musʿir, 'of a distinguished family[6];' the rest of his education was obtained in other Syrian towns. Owing to the fame of the Hamdanide prince Saif

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[1] Infra, p. 17, &c. In S Z II 44 there is an allusion to a ل written with gold ink by Ibn Hilāl, a famous caligrapher of the time in Baghdad (ob. 412).

[2] The author cited in the preface to S Z, p 4, l 5

[3] Ibid. Safadi gives the same story, but is rightly sceptical

[4] Usāmah Ibn Munḳidh, ibid p 3 This writer died in 584 (Ibn Khall I 79), but was well-versed in the history of this region

[5] Infra, p 40

[6] Infra, p ١٣١ He cited traditions on the authority of Abu 'l-Fath Mohammed Ibn Al-Husain, infra, p ١٣٢

al-daulah, and the eminence of the authors whom his liberality attracted to Haleb, the literary renown of Syria stood very high at this time; Abu 'l-'Alā's contemporary Al-Tha'ālibi not only places the poets of Syria at the head of his well-known anthology, but also endeavours in the preface to that work to account for their superiority over the poets of other Mohammedan countries[1]. Among the scholars whom Saif al-daulah had attracted to Ḥaleb was the grammarian and archaeologist Ibn Khālūyah, whose lectures were crowded with disciples from all countries[2], and although Abu 'l-'Alā can scarcely have attended these, since Ibn Khālūyah died when the formèr was seven years old, we are told that he studied under Ibn Khālūyah's successors, of whom one was probably that Abu 'l-Kāsim Al-Mubārak who is mentioned in Letter XXVII[3]. The Banu Kauthar, of whom less is known, are also mentioned among his instructors at Haleb, while the name of another teacher is given as Mohammed Ibn Abdallah Ibn Sa'd[4] Most of these Syrian towns possessed great libraries—one of those at Ḥaleb is said to have contained 20,000 volumes[5], and after making use of those at Ḥaleb, Abu 'l-'Alā proceeded to commit to memory some of the contents of those at Antioch[6] and Tripoli[7] At the former of these places he is said to have exhibited some of those feats of memory to which reference has been made. 'Passing by Latakieh,' the biographer adds, 'he made the acquaintance of a monk, who suggested to him doubts concerning revealed religion from which he was never able to free himself[8].'

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[1] In Aghāni XV 113 there is an account of an earlier controversy about the merits of the poets of different countries, but this was to a large extent political

[2] Ibn Khallikan I 197, 198, Yatīmat al-Dahr I 76

[3] Infra, p 74 [4] Infra, p ١٢٩ [5] Ibn Al-'Adīm, Paris MS 56 b

[6] S Z, preface, p 3, l 2 a f Antioch was at this time in the possession of the Greeks

[7] Infra, p ١٢٩ The custom of leaving libraries to mosques is well known, Abu 'l-'Alā's contemporary Abu Nasr Al-Manāzī left his to the mosques of Āmid and Mayyāfārikīn (Ibn Khall I 55), and likewise Al-Wazīr Al-Maghribi left his books to the people of Mayyāfārikīn (MS Marsh 333) Notices of the price of books at this time (Ibn Khall I 425, 'A copy of the Jamharah of Ibn Duraid fetched sixty dinars,' ibid II 463, 'A copy of the Dīwān of Jarīr fetched ten dinars') show that such benefactions were very necessary For the fortunes made by booksellers see Ibn Khall I 79

[8] Infra, p ١٢٩ Safadi has the same

This may have been so · but the Christian monk is a person who figures in so many of these narratives[1] that we are justified in suspecting the truth of this statement. The scepticism for which Abu 'l-'Alā afterwards became famous can be accounted for by other causes than the suggestions of a monk. The poet whom Abu 'l-'Alā took for his model in his early compositions, and who has, ever since he wrote, been the most popular of the Arabic poets, Al-Mutanabbi, more than once in his early writings speaks with insufficient respect of the Prophets[2], and even his mature poems are not quite free from the taint of unorthodoxy[3], albeit the victories of his patron Saif al-daulah over the Christians not unfrequently warm him to religious fervour and fanaticism. But by Abu 'l-'Alā's time events had changed. What he witnessed was a three-cornered duel between two Mohammedan powers and one Christian power: and of this war Haleb formed the centre More than once in Abu 'l-'Alā's time Haleb owed its deliverance from Mohammedan conquerors to Christian allies.

Abu 'l-'Alā's studies were the natural preparation for a lucrative career to which blindness was no obstacle In the Aghāni we read of many blind poets, and indeed of one[4] whose blindness was brought about by the same malady which deprived Abu 'l-'Alā of his sight. The custom of bestowing large sums in return for complimentary odes was inherited by the Caliphs from the pre-Islamic dynasties; and what the Caliphs did on a large scale was also done by their ministers, provincial governors[5], and in general by men of wealth and station in a scarcely less lavish fashion. The reader of the Kitāb al-Aghāni is astounded by the size of the gratuities earned by verses often of moderate merit; and yet the statements of this work often rest on excellent evidence, and the autobiography of 'Umāiah of

[1] See, e.g., the story in the Aghāni VIII 185

[2] Mutanabbi, ed Dieterici, pp 30, l 6, 32, l 18, 35, l 36 (perhaps he owed his name Al-Mutanabbi 'the Prophetaster' to the last two passages, poets who were named after a single verse are enumerated by Jāhiz, Tibyān II. 51, Kāmil I 322, Zahr al-Ādāb I 39), 96, ll 18, 19

[3] P 622, l 41

[4] 'Ali Ibn Jabalah, Aghāni XVIII. 101. The same calamity happened later in life to Nasr Al-Numairī, Ibn Khall II 206

[5] An Ibn Hayyūs became wealthy from the gifts of the governor of Haleb, Ibn Khall II 14 (anno 464).

Yemen[1], who flourished in the middle of the sixth century of Islam, is a record of parallel experiences. One is inclined to wonder, when studying these narratives, that the profession of poet was not more overstocked in Mohammedan states than it appears to have been, for in no other was the disproportion greater between effort and remuneration There were however one or two objections. In the first place the profession was to many people's thinking[2] not respectable. The three great poets of the Abbasid period all beg in a manner that to almost any taste is shameful and disgusting, and some of their fellow-craftsmen condescended to even greater humiliation. Even where the *lex artis* did not enforce this, the only encomia that had commercial value were of a sort that bore no relation to the truth. Besides the degradation that this calling entailed, it was not free from danger Fortune was fickle, and it rarely happened that a patron had the will and the power to subsidize the same encomiast for a great length of time; and although some of the poets wisely retired from the business when they had 'made their pile,' most of them squandered their gains as speedily as they were acquired, and were constantly in search of fresh patrons When, after serving a patron, one of them wished to enter the service of his enemy or his murderer, the celebrity of the odes that had under the former *régime* won him fortune, now stood in his way, and though some could, owing to their talent, command any patronage, others could never explain with grace that their earlier compliments had been intended not for their patron's person, but for his strong-box

Although Abu 'l-'Alā repeatedly asserts[3] that his poems were not written for hire, it is nevertheless probable that he originally intended to follow the profession that has been outlined, and indeed the admiration of Mutanabbi that appears in his early efforts makes it likely that he at one time intended to imitate that poet's career as well as his style He might seem to have started in a manner not unworthy of his model. for, as Dr. Rieu has pointed out, his earlier panegyrics

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[1] Recently published by M Derenbourg

[2] See Ḳāmil I 269, 362, Aghāni XII 112

[3] Infra, p 40, Tabrīzī's preface to S Z (Bodleian MS), S Z II 45, 66

are addressed to Sa'īd al-daulah, the Hamdanide prince who was proclaimed ruler of Haleb in 381, and probably belong to the years [991] 383 and 384, while the next are addressed to the two generals sent [993] [994] by the Fatimide Caliph to oust Sa'īd al-daulah from his government. We learn however from one of the chronicles that during this war[1] Ma'arrah at one time dissociated its fortunes from those of Haleb, Abu 'l-'Alā's muse may therefore have but followed the politics of his native town Although his Sakt al-Zand contains not a few encomia, those that have been quoted are the only poems addressed to men of high station who would be expected to reward them From one poem however[2] admitted into the Sakṭ al-Zand the portion containing the encomium has been deliberately omitted, and in another[3] the identity of the prince eulogized is carefully concealed In a later composition, addressed to some men of note, he gives it to be understood that he seeks no remuneration[4] The assumption that he commenced a career as professional poet, but almost immediately abandoned it, will accord sufficiently well with the assertion that from his twentieth year he had lived and studied independently.

Returning to Ma'arrah after the termination of his studies he appears to have been assigned from a trust-fund an income of thirty dinars yearly[5]—a smaller sum than was often earned by a single encomium, and this, we are told, he shared with the attendant whom his blindness rendered indispensable At a time when the governor of Haleb was carrying on war against the Egyptian forces and calling in the aid of the Greeks, we need not ask how it came about that any of the inhabitants of towns subject to Haleb were so impoverished. Probably owing to the sacrifices demanded by Sa'īd al-daulah and his mayor of the palace Lu'lu', Ma'arrah in 386, at the instance of [996] a certain Riyāḥ al-Saifi, rebelled and joined the Egyptians, and the inhabitants of Ma'arrah probably owed their deliverance to the Egyptian minister to whose son the First and Second Letters are addressed

To the period between 386 and 399 many of the poems included [996] [1008]

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[1] Ibn Al-'Adīm (Paris MS), see below [2] S Z I 156 [3] S Z I 152, l 3
[4] S Z II. 66 [5] Infra, p ١٢٩

in the Sakṭ al-Zand apparently belong It seems clear, too, that the First Letter is in answer to an official communication addressed to the people of Ma'arrah by Al-Maghribi; who probably, when restored to favour at the court of the Egyptian Caliph[1], took that opportunity of renewing his relations with the town to which he was already favourably known. The fact of Abu 'l-'Alā replying to it—although he speaks somewhat uncourteously of his fellow-citizens therein—shows that he had by that time (near the end of the period with which we are occupied) acquired a position of consequence in his native town. This position would be confirmed by the favourable reception accorded to his communication For although Al-Maghribi's fame as a politician was not of the best sort, the importance of the posts offered him shows that as a writer he ranked very high.

The governor of Haleb, Lu'lu', had before the end of this period consented to be the vassal of the Egyptian Caliph; in 399 he died and was succeeded by his son, who for several years had shared the government with him Before Abu Nasr's accession, however, the event had happened which led to Abu 'l-'Alā's journey to Baghdad. 'The governor of Haleb,' we are told, 'disputed the poet's pension[2],' and he went to Baghdad to maintain his claim to it. This statement is not free from difficulty, for the governor of Ḥaleb at this time was not dependent on Baghdad, but on Cairo We may, however, believe that the loss of his pension was the reason for the poet's quitting Ma'arrah, without supposing that he went to Baghdad to recover it[3] His letters and poems say nothing about the pension; but it is clear from them that he went to Baghdad with the idea of

1008 (margin)

[1] See note 2 to Letter I. [2] Infra, p ١٢٩.

[3] The date of the journey to Baghdad can be fixed by the statement in Letter VII (p 41), that he left Baghdad in the last third of Ramadan, for all authorities agree that he left Baghdad in 400 The author of the note appended to Tabrīzī's commentary on the S Z, probably Tabrīzī himself, says that he stayed in Baghdad one year and seven months, that he started in 398, and arrived in Baghdad in 399 The Euphrates Valley route is estimated at twenty-five days (Cowper, p. 55), this would make Abu 'l-'Alā to have started at the beginning of 399 But we know that he was seriously delayed on the way, and thus Tabrīzī's statements are shown to be accurate The apparent discrepancy between his having started in 398, and left Baghdad in Ramadan 400, after seventeen months' stay, led to the idea that he had made two journeys, and this opinion, which appears in Ibn Khallikan, was adopted by Von Kremer

(margin: May 12, 1010; Sept 1008)

staying there permanently[1]. It is not unnatural that a man who had won some provincial reputation should have wished to try his fortune at the capital; we know of many others who went to Baghdad on a similar errand[2]. The project was countenanced, if not encouraged, by the poet's mother[3], and the expenses of the journey defrayed by one of his maternal uncles[4]. He even commenced a letter to the Kāḍi Abu 'l-Tayyib Tāhir[5], originally of Tabaristān, but resident in Baghdad, informing him of his intended journey to the latter's happy hall. The letter 'was never finished so as to reach its destination,' Abu 'l-ʿAlā may have learnt before sending it something of the character of the 'happy hall' of a man who seems to have belonged to a class who, 'when they washed their fine garments, used their houses as clothes till the washing was over[6].' But the ideas in the letter were worth employing for another occasion and that occasion soon presented itself

Mr Cowper in his work *Through Turkish Arabia* tells us of three ways by which it is possible to reach Baghdad from Aleppo, in going Abu 'l-ʿAlā followed the first of the three, i e the Euphrates Valley route. Mr Cowper in his journey went by land, following the course of the Euphrates; but from Mr. Ainsworth's *Narrative of the Euphrates Expedition*[7] it would appear that the river is navigable as far as Anbār, and Abu 'l-ʿAlā descended the Euphrates in a vessel provided by his uncle Where he embarked is not certain, if he went by Aleppo, Bālīs is the point at which the road touches the river. The vessel got safely to Anbār[8], where a canal leads to the Tigris, forming the most direct route to Baghdad, but for some reason this route was not practicable at the time, and the vessel proceeded down the river to Kādisiyyah, with the intention of reaching Baghdad some

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[1] Infra, p 35 [2] We may instance Tabrīzi

[3] Infra, p 35 [4] Infra, p 39 [5] Letter XXV

[6] See Ibn Khallikan I 293, where this verse of Abu Tāhir is quoted Since Abu 'l-ʿAlā, in the verses cited there, calls Abu Tāhir 'a man who is not rich,' we are justified in supposing him to have been very poor He was, according to Ibn Khallikan (I 38), the only centenarian from 300 A H to Ibn Khallikan's own time, having lived from 348 to 450 He was Kādi in the quarter of Karkh We should have expected a Kādi's earnings to be considerable

[7] London, 1888 [8] S Z I 160

other way At Kādisiyyah it was seized by the 'Sultan's[1]' officers[2], and the poet was left to proceed to Baghdad as well as he might.

He found a lodging in an old part of the city called 'Suwaikat Ibn Ghālib[3],' where other men of letters had resided[4]. Complimentary verses were sent him by the Ḳādi Abu 'l-Ṭayyib[5] to which he improvised replies[6]. Abu 'l-Tayyib was a pupil of Abu Hāmid al-Isfarāini, then in the zenith of his fame as a theologian, and ever since known as 'the Professor' *par excellence* in works on metaphysics and the principles of jurisprudence Abu Hāmid had recently received a mark of the Sultan's favour, having been rescued by him in one of the religious riots so common at this time in Baghdad, and restored to his mosque[7]. It is probable that it was by the Kādi's mediation that Abu 'l-'Alā solicited Abu Ḥāmid's services in the recovery of the confiscated vessel. With this view Abu 'l-'Alā addressed to him the poem[8] whence the above notice of his voyage has been taken, embodying the ideas he had intended for the Kādi, with learned allusions which may well have puzzled its recipient Abu Ḥāmid was either unable or unwilling to perform the service required of him, which was afterwards rendered by a certain Abu Ahmad Al-Hakkāri, who is thanked for the favour in a poem written after the author's return to Ma'arrah[9]

As in ancient Rome, so in the great Mohammedan cities, public recitation was the mode whereby men of letters made their talents known to their contemporaries. From very early times it had been customary to employ the mosques for this purpose, and in Abu 'l-'Alā's time poems were recited in the mosque of Al-Mansūr at Baghdad[10]. Better accommodation was, however, provided by the Maecenates, who took a pride in collecting savants and littérateurs

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[1] The Sultan' was doubtless the Amir al-Umarā at Baghdad, at this time Bahā al-daulah

[2] In S Z II 121 they are called 'the collectors of tithe'

[3] Ibn Khall I 292 In S Z II 140 (A H 420) he says his residence in Baghdad was 'in the Katī'ah, by the river,' but this is like saying 'in the Square, in London' See Yākūt, s v Probably Abu 'l-'Alā's Katī'ah was that of Al-Fukahā, S Z II 100

[4] Yākūt, s v

[5] Ibn Khall, l c

[6] His talent for improvisation is also referred to by Dhahabi, infra, p ١٣٠, l. 14

[7] Ibn Al-Athīr, anno 398

[8] S Z I. 158 comm

[9] S Z II 121

[10] This was done by Mihyār, Ibn Khall II 195 Cf ibid I 447 for the mosque at Kufah

in their houses The biographer Ibn Khallikan gives a description of the gatherings held at the house of Abu 'l-'Alā's contemporary Ya'kūb Ibn Kils, Vizier of the Fatimide Caliph Al-'Azīz in Cairo, which illustrates the plan followed by the wealthy patrons of literature: 'Every[1] Thursday night he would hold a *salon*, in which he would recite his compositions, and thither would flock the Kāḍis, the Jurisconsults, the Readers of the Koran, the Grammarians, all sorts of men of eminence, and the chief Assessors, the Ministers and the Traditionalists, and when his recitation was over, the poets would rise and recite their encomiums of him,' &c The Maecenas of Baghdad shortly before Abu 'l-'Alā went there was Abu Nasr Sābūr Ibn Ardashīr[2], repeatedly Vizier to the Buyid prince Bahā al-daulah, then supreme in the Eastern Caliphate Sābūr's liberality to poets was such that Tha'ālibi in his literary history finds it necessary to devote a whole chapter to his encomiasts. A story told, probably, of him[3] illustrates the manners of the time too well to be omitted here To one of his encomiasts, the Sharīf Al-Radī[4], on the occasion of a birth in the Sharīf's house, he sent a dish containing 1,000 dinars Al-Radī sent it back, saying that he did not receive presents. Sābūr sent it once again, saying it was intended for the nurses Al-Radī returned it again, saying that in the family of the Prophet which he represented none but women of the family were employed on such occasions. Sābūr sent it a third time, requesting Al-Radī to distribute it among the men of letters who attended his Academy, for Al-Raḍī had taken a house for the use of his admirers, to which he had given that name. One of these persons took a single dinar, broke off a piece, and returned the dinar to the dish This, he said, was to pay for some oil which he had taken on credit from a dealer the night before, when, owing to the absence of the Custodian, he could not get at the stores of the Academy Thereafter Al-Radī had a number of keys made, one

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[1] Ibn Khall II 441

[2] Ibn Khall I 250, Yatīmat al-Dahr II 290–297 The biography by Safadi is far fuller and more instructive He was in exile in 400

[3] This anecdote is told in the biography prefixed to the poems of Al-Sharīf Al-Radī, Beyrut, 1307 A H It is told there of Al-Wazir Al-Muhallabi, but this person was dead before Al-Radī's birth

[4] Note that this, and not Al-Ridā, is the right spelling

of which was given to each member of the Academy, so that they could get what they required when the Custodian was away.

This anecdote illustrates the duties of the Custodian of an Academy, and also shows that membership was a valuable privilege. Now Al-Raḍī's Academy would seem to have been modelled on that founded by Sābūr[1] which bore the same name, and which was celebrated by Abu 'l-'Alā both in verse[2] and prose[3] It was founded in the year 381, in a part of Baghdad called 'Between the Two Walls' in the quarter Karkh[4] Expense was not spared in furnishing it with a choice library, there were a hundred copies of the Koran written by the Banu Muklah[5], and 10,400 volumes belonging to other departments of literature, most of them either autographs[6], or such as had been in the possession of famous men. Sābūr provided funds for the maintenance of the establishment, and put the whole under the direction of two members of the family of Ali[7], one of whom, Abu Abdallah Al-Baṭhāwī[8], was alive after Abu 'l-'Alā's visit to Baghdad. Although the fortunes of Sābūr were variable, his institution was left unmolested
1025 till his death in 416, and survived till 451, when the part of Baghdad
1059 in which it was situated was burnt, and the books and other treasures became the object of official and private plunder[9]. In Abu 'l-'Alā's time it was a rendezvous for men engaged in literary pursuits, and provided a place for literary and musical entertainments[10]. Among Abu 'l-'Alā's acquaintance two are given the title 'Custodian of the Academy in Baghdad' One of these persons, 'Abd al-Salām of Baṣrah, who in any case held some official post at Baghdad, and whose grammatical and geographical studies were famous[11], was on terms of warm friendship with Abu 1-'Alā, as we know from another

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[1] Ibn Khall I 250 [2] Ibn Khall I 250

[3] Infra, p 58 See also p 40, end

[4] Yākūt s v بين السورين

[5] Safadı, s. v Sābūr On the style of writing alluded to, see Ibn Khall II 80

[6] Yākūt, s v بين السورين

[7] Safadı, l c. [8] Ibn Al-Athīr, anno 402 [9] Ibn Al-Athīr, anno 451

[10] Safadı's words are وقعت عليها بدار العزل Cf Ibn Khall I 250

[11] Index to Yākūt, s v Safadı (MS Arch A 26, 175 a) says he died in 329 (read 429) he praises his generosity and learning

source[1], besides the prose and verse epistles addressed to him. He had attended the lectures of the younger Sīrāfī, now we know that Abu 'l-ʿAlā was commissioned by his uncle[2] to get a copy of one of the elder Sīrāfī's works when in Baghdad; but whether this quest led to the poet's acquaintance with ʿAbd al-Salām or whether it was formed through the mediation of the poet's fellow-tribesman and pupil Abu 'l-Ḳāsim Ibn Al-Muḥsin Al-Tanūkhī[3], or in any other way, we do not know The other Custodian of the Academy, who certainly had a right to that title, was a certain Abu Manṣūr, who apparently is only known to us from Abu 'l-ʿAlā's writings[4] The friendship of these persons could not fail to be of use to a man who came to Baghdad on such an errand as Abu 'l-ʿAlā's

At Sābūr's Academy he probably met most of those persons of literary renown with whom he is known to have been on friendly terms. He experienced some uncivil treatment, as when, attending a lecture by Abu 'l-Hasan Al-Rabaʿī[5], regarded as the greatest grammarian of the time[6], then in his seventy-second year, he was admitted with the uncourteous phrase 'Bid the *Istubl* enter,' *Istubl* being Syrian slang for 'blind[7].' On this occasion Abu 'l-ʿAlā left the room indignantly; but on another, in Al-Murtaḍā's salon, he turned an insult into an opportunity for displaying some rare erudition, which brought him into note[8]. On the whole it appears that the reception accorded to his Sakt al-Zand was favourable[9], and that the savants of Baghdad treated him as one of themselves

Doubtless his fame had to some extent preceded him, and his relations with eminent men of letters like Al-Maghribī and Abu 'l-Kāsim Ibn Jalabāt[10] (himself a poet whom Sābūr had patronized[11])

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[1] Ibn Khall II 462

[2] See Letters X and XI

[3] That he was a friend of ʿAbd al-Salām we know from S Z II 112. On him and his family see Ibn Khall I 565

[4] Letter XIX with notes

[5] Safadī, f 62 b

[6] Ibn Khall I. 433

[7] Safadi spells the word اصطبل and اسطبل Greek *τυφλός* (?)

[8] Safadī, ibid

[9] Infra, p ١٣٠, S Z II 45

[10] S Z I 99

[11] Yatīmat al-Dahr II 170 The poem quoted in the last note contains allusions which show us that this person must have been considerably older than Abu 'l-ʿAlā From p 103 he appears to have been a favourite of ʿAḍud al-daulah, who died in 372, when Abu 'l-ʿAlā was eight years old, the commentator states that he was entrusted with the government of Baghdad

would facilitate his admission to the inner circle Besides the persons already mentioned he found a friend in Ibn Faurajah[1], famous for his commentaries on Mutanabbi's poems, to whom on leaving Baghdad he addressed a poetical epistle; and another in a certain Abu Bakr Ahmad Al-Sābūnī, whose address he gives so accurately in Letter XV. It was in 'Lotus-street in the quarter of the Oil-merchants.' More important than these were the family of the Nakīb, or head of the descendants of Ali, whom he may have met at Sābūr's Academy The head of the family when Abu 'l-'Alā entered Baghdad was Abu Aḥmad Al-Ḥusain, called 'the Pure' and 'the Meritorious,' his name meets us frequently in the contemporary history, and he appears to have been a capable man, often entrusted with difficult commissions, which he discharged with ability His eldest son Al-Murtadā[2] was a poet of no great note, but of considerable renown as a theologian. The father's honours, however, fell not to him, but to his younger brother, Al-Radī, who was inferior to his brother as a theologian, but is regarded by Mohammedan critics[3] as the greatest poet of the Prophet's line His bulky Dīwān, containing poems written from 369, when he was ten years old, to 406, the year of his death, is not only of considerable poetical merit, but forms a highly valuable supplement to the chronicles of this period We have already seen that he played the part of literary patron on a great scale, but the same biographer who admires his liberality states that he used the administrative powers that were sometimes committed to him with great cruelty, and though he devoted his poetical talent to the flattery of the successive Caliphs and their Buyid master, he appears to have had the vanity to aspire to the Caliphate himself

979/80

1015/16

Towards the end of Jumāda I in 400 A.H, when Abu 'l-'Alā had been some months in Baghdad, Abu Ahmad (the father) died[4], and

Jan 1010

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[1] See index to Mutanabbi, ed Dieterici The person whose life is given in the Fawāt al-wafayāt, as having died in 380, also a commentator on Mutanabbi, was probably this man's father

[2] Ibn Khall. I 423 Fakhr al-dīn Al-Rāzi in his Arba'īn (Bodleian MS) quotes some of his opinions

[3] See preface to his Dīwān, ut supra

[4] Dīwān, p 736

Abu 'l-'Alā composed a lament over him[1] which is regarded as one of his finest performances[2], and which, though it complimented the sons, also contained a distinct assurance that their alms were not required This refusal to write verse professionally was doubtless deserving of respect, but Abu 'l-'Alā was probably defeating thereby the object with which he went to Baghdad. For though other roads towards obtaining the means of supporting himself at Baghdad may have been open to him, that which he refused to follow was the most certain. Something, perhaps, was to be got by dedication fees[3]; something, perhaps, by teaching—but it is probable that this profession was really overstocked at the capital, and Letter VII distinctly asserts this Still, although in one of the odes written in Baghdad[4] he laments his want of means and friends, it appears from other utterances[5] that it was in his power to obtain employment there, and that he had friends both willing and able to help him. Nevertheless four months after the death of Abu Ahmad we find that he is compelled to quit Baghdad

In a poem written[6] after his return he assigns as the reasons for this step the news of his mother's illness, and his diminishing resources. Perhaps however the true reason is to be found in an event to which allusion is made by the historian Abu 'l-Mahāsin. Speaking of the poet Mutanabbi, he mentions[7] an ode 'on account of which there took place what is known to have taken place between the Sharīf Al-Radī and Abu 'l-'Alā Al-Ma'arri' Abu 'l-Mahāsin does not elucidate this mysterious phrase any further; but one of the MS. biographies[8] tells us what happened, substituting however for Al-Radī's name that of his brother Al-Murtadā. As we have seen, Abu 'l-'Alā was received at this person's salons, but it so happened that Abu 'l-'Alā was a passionate admirer of the poet Mutanabbi, while Al-Murtadā had a strong dislike for that poet Had Abu 'l-'Alā been wise, he would have kept his predilection to himself when in the presence of Al-Murtadā, not being

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[1] S Z II 55 [2] Ibn Khallikan II 4

[3] A contemporary of Abu 'l-'Alā got 5,000 dinars (in Spain) as the price of the dedication of a book, Ibn Khall I 287

[4] S Z II 53 [5] Ibid II 54 [6] Ibid II 119.

[7] *Annales*, ed Juynboll, II 371 [8] Safadi, f 62 b

so, one day when the latter was attacking Mutanabbi, our poet declared that had Mutanabbi only written one particular poem[1], it would have demonstrated his excellence. Al-Murtadā, on hearing this, ordered him to be dragged out of the room by the feet. He alleged as the reason for this violence that Abu 'l-'Alā must have been alluding to a verse in the same ode in which Mutanabbi says that the criticisms of inferior writers are the best proof of his own perfection[2] Abu 'l-'Alā must therefore have called him, Al-Murtaḍā, 'an inferior writer,' under cover of this quotation This anecdote, which is too circumstantial to be fictitious, probably gives us the real reason why Abu 'l-'Alā left Baghdad, for such a humiliation was so likely to bring others in its train that it was unsafe for him to remain The family of the Sharīfs were on a familiar footing with both sovereigns, and at times Al-Radī was given dictatorial power in Baghdad[3] The event must have taken place within the four months specified, for Abu 'l-'Alā was far too spirited a man to write such an ode as the dirge on Abu Ahmad, if he had already undergone the insult that has been described How far Al-Murtadā's interpretation of his quotation was justified, or what were the motives which dictated it, cannot now be settled.

The return journey, when determined on, was made by a route resembling the third of those described by Mr Cowper; by boat as far as Mausul—scarcely the same boat as had descended the Euphrates, which, when recovered, had probably been sent back the way it came, from Mausul by road to Ḥasaniyyah, Mayyāfārikīn, Āmid, Ḥaleb, Rakkah[4]. By this route the Euphrates is crossed at Birejik, and at Urfah this more northerly route separates from the more southerly which passes through Mardin. The northern route goes through some high passes, which the author's blindness excuses him for not describing Between Ḥasaniyyah and Āmid the road was safe, elsewhere it was full of dangers, which however he seems to have escaped He passed by Haleb, where his benefactors resided, unwilling, it would seem, to

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[1] Ed Dieterici, p 265

[2] Verse 39 واذا اتتك مذمتي من ناقص فهي الشهادة لي بانی فاضل

[3] Dīwān of Al-Radī, p 873 (388 A H), in this very year (400) he applies to Bahā al-daulah to be relieved of some of his offices (ibid p 746)

[4] Letter VII

bring them in person the intelligence of the disappointing result of his journey. He halted at Raḳḳah instead, and thence despatched a letter to Abu Tāhir, followed shortly afterwards by the highly interesting document which forms No. VII of this collection Among all his compositions this is the one which should make us rate his character highest

The resolution to quit Baghdad would appear to have been regretted as soon as it was carried into execution, and the poems [1] and letters in which this subject is treated are of interest as showing the impression left by the capital of Islam on the mind of a provincial who visited it at a time when the brilliancy of the Caliph's court was a thing of the past, and who, owing to his blindness, was incapable of enjoying many of its attractions. None of the language used by Italians about Rome or by Frenchmen about Paris could exceed in warmth and enthusiasm that which Abu 'l-'Alā repeatedly employs about Baghdad. He who has seen Baghdad, he thinks, will never find a place like it [2], the same person must have induced him to leave Baghdad as had induced Eve to eat the apple [3] Syria, he confesses, is more friendly and less expensive

A contemporary of Abu 'l-'Alā, it may be observed, has left us some very similar experiences. The Ḳādi 'Abd Al-Wahhāb [4], a native of the capital, told his fellow-citizens that if he could only have been sure of getting a meal of bread every morning and evening, he would never have left them Passing by Ma'arrah on his way to Egypt, some twenty years later, he was entertained by Abu 'l-'Alā, and the two authors, both rejected of Baghdad, had an opportunity of comparing their sentiments.

Unable permanently to enjoy the society of the savants, the poets, and the thinkers of the capital, Abu 'l-'Alā determined, even before he left Baghdad [5], not to put up with that of the provincial wits of Ma'arrah, in the letter addressed to his uncle and also in a public epistle [6] sent before his arrival to the citizens of Ma'arrah he signified his intention of retiring from the world and 'confining himself to his

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[1] S Z II 68 sqq
[2] Infra p 64
[3] S Z II 125
[4] Ibn Khall. I 383
[5] Infra, p 48
[6] Letter VIII.

dwelling[1],' as the phrase ran. He therefore requested that he might be spared the greetings ordinarily accorded to returning friends. His biographers also date from his return to Ma'arrah his adoption of a rigidly ascetic regime, involving abstinence from animal food and clothing as well as wine. Like many of those who have failed to secure material prosperity, he found comfort in a system which flatters the vanity of those who have not succeeded by teaching them that success is not worth attaining. The news of his mother's death, of whom he speaks with much pathos in Letter VII, reaching him about this time, put his philosophy to a fresh test.

'In the morning the traveller shall praise the night-journey; the darkness will then have cleared away.' The result of his visit to Baghdad, where the leading writers of the time had treated him as one of themselves, became apparent as soon as he came back. Disciples began to flock to Ma'arrah from all quarters to hear his lectures on the grammar, poetry, and antiquities of the Arabs[2]. The house or cave which he inhabited became the chief sight in Ma'arrah, and he himself the most important inhabitant. What he says of Al-Maghribi in the First Letter became literally true of himself. 'As Sinai derives its fame from Moses and the Stone from Abraham, so Ma'arrah' is from this time known by him.

The complete isolation which he promised himself in Letters VII and VIII seems never to have been carried out. The change from failure to success reacted on his temper, and an eminent contemporary speaks of him on the authority of one who knew him, as a man who, in spite of his blindness, could play chess and *nard*, and was an adept in all forms of literary endeavour, both earnest and sportive, and who thanked God for his blindness as others thanked Him for their sight[3]. The letters, most of which were written after the return from Baghdad, exhibit the author as anything but a hermit; he appears rather as a man of many friends, who takes a kindly interest both in men and things. The correspondence with his uncle, of which we have specimens in Letters XIV, XVIII, and others, demonstrates this.

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[1] Jāhiz, Tibyān II. 101; Ibn Khall. I. 294. [2] Infra, p. ١٣٠.

[3] Tha'ālibi (quoted by Safadi f. 62 a) after Abu 'l-Ḥasan Al-Dulafi Al-Massīsi.

He kept up relations with the successive governors of Haleb by dedicating to them some of his numerous writings. To 'Azīz al-daulah, an Armenian slave of Manjūtakin, one of the generals sent against Ḥaleb in 384, who, having found favour with Al-Hākim, was made governor of Haleb in 407, Abu 'l-'Alā addressed his works called *The Horse and the Mule* [1] and *Al-Kā'if*, and to Sanad al-daulah, who in 414 was transferred from Apamea to Haleb, he dedicated his treatise called *Sanadiyyah* [2] after that governor's name. 'Azīz al-daulah, as we learn from the letters [3], made an attempt to engage Abu 'l-'Alā as court-poet at Haleb—perhaps when on the death of Al-Hākim he had leisure to attend to such matters; for two years after his instalment, hearing that the Egyptian tyrant's feelings towards him had changed, 'Azīz al-daulah broke out into open rebellion and caused coins to be struck in his own name. His request was addressed to Abu 'l-'Alā through a man who afterwards, at any rate, was employed in important posts; when in the year 428 Muntakhab al-daulah was sent from Egypt to restore order in Syria, the same Sadakah Ibn Yūsuf Al-Fallāhī, who on the occasion with which we are dealing had communicated 'Azīz al-daulah's proposal, was sent with him as financial adviser [4]. Abu 'l-'Alā's courteous and witty refusal of the offer made him forms the subject of Letter XXIV. 'Azīz al-daulah had to content himself with the services of Mufaddal Ibn Sa'd instead [5].

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Of the disciples who came to learn of him, many attained distinction; the best known to Europeans is Abu Zakariyyā of Tabriz, who having studied in the Nizāmiyyah College in Baghdad was recommended to pursue some special line of research under Abu 'l-'Alā [6], some forty years after Abu 'l-'Alā's journey. His well-known commentary on the Hamāsah preserves some of his master's learning [7].

Abu 'l-'Alā maintained a learned correspondence with men of letters in various parts of the Mohammedan world. Letter XXVII, the most learned of the collection, is a specimen of it; but at times he would

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[1] Ibn Al-'Adīm (Paris MS.). [2] Ibid. [3] Letter XXIV.

[4] Appendix to the History of Damascus (MS. Hunt. 126). [5] Ibid.

[6] Ibn Khallikan II. 307.

[7] Several more disciples are mentioned by Dhahabi infra, p. ١٣٧.

seem to have been importuned with unimportant questions, and Letter XXVI, which is somewhat obscure, is apparently addressed to some one who pestered him in this way. Like other eminent writers he was sometimes compelled to employ his pen for more practical purposes The Sakt al-Zand contains a poem written on behalf of a certain Abdallah Ibn Al-Sakkā[1], a secretary, whose employer had reason for suspecting his fidelity. Letter III is clearly addressed to some governor on behalf of a political exile, and Letter IV seems to show that Abu 'l-'Alā's intercession was successful Letters XX and XL clearly have a political tendency, and with the aid of Letter XVII something like a consistent narrative may be evolved. Letter XVII is about a recommendation by the poet's uncle of a certain Abu 'l-Hasan Mohammed Ibn Sa'īd Ibn Sinān, who was then contemplating a journey to Ma'arrah This man's son is mentioned as 1047/8 a poet of note in Ḥaleb in the year 439[2]· Letter XL represents Abu 'l-Hasan himself as deputy-governor of Haleb in the absence of the 'Sultan;' and the visit to Ma'arrah would appear to be an episode in a pilgrimage which he was then planning, from which Letter XL is written to dissuade him at the instance of certain other residents in Ḥaleb who required his presence to protect them from the Greeks This is clearly the letter to which reference is made in Letter XX, addressed to another Abu 'l-Ḥasan son of 'Abd Al-Mun'im, whose 1029 father appears to have been Kādi in Haleb in the year 420[3]. The letter of Abu 'l-Hasan Ibn 'Abd Al-Mun'im to which Letter XX is an answer was clearly a request to the poet to dissuade Ibn Sa'īd from staying at Ma'arrah, whence the words 'albeit the people of Ma'arrah will not relish what it contains' can easily be interpreted. We shall probably be right in dating these letters about 412. For in Letter XXXVI the same Abu 'l-Hasan Ibn Sa'īd figures as having conveyed a literary proposal for the 'Sultan' to Abu 'l-'Alā, and the Sultan of that letter is certainly 'Azīz al-daulah, to whom we know the work called *The Horse and the Mule* to have been dedicated. The 'Sultan' of Letter XL is probably the same, and indeed 'Azīz al-daulah was the only ruler of Haleb since the days of the Ham-

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[1] S Z I 174 [2] Ibn Khall II 157 [3] Ibn Al-'Adīm (ut supra)

danides[1] who arrogated to himself the independence which that title implies

In 418 Abu 'l-'Alā undertook the office of public intercessor for his town with Sālih Ibn Mirdās, called Asad al-daulah, then governor of Haleb. In the preceding year[2] a riot had been got up by a woman who declared in the mosque of Ma'arrah that she had been insulted by the keeper of a tavern, doubtless a Christian. The fanatical population had, on hearing this, proceeded to demolish the tavern and plunder its contents. Ṣālih's Vizier, Theodore, was also a Christian, and being incensed against the people of Ma'arrah, whom he supposed to be implicated in the murder of his father-in-law[3], had encouraged his master to arrest seventy of the leading men of the place The event must have occasioned some noise if it be true that prayers were offered for these persons in the mosques of Amid and Mayyāfārikīn[4]. Sālih, passing by Ma'arrah, summoned Abu 'l-'Alā to his presence, and the poet's eloquent address induced Sālih to liberate the prisoners—but not, apparently, to remit the fine which Theodore had imposed on them, without Abu 'l-'Alā's knowledge Abu 'l-'Alā celebrated the success of his mission in a humorous epigram[5]. It is not surprising to find this matter slightly exaggerated in the account quoted by Dhahabi 'from the back of an ancient MS.[6],' which however agrees substantially with that of the historian whom we have followed In the next year another conqueror took Haleb, and his emissary, passing by Ma'arrah on the way to Hamath, enquired after the poet[7]. A yet later traveller[8], whose narrative is in Persian, speaks not only of the honourable position held by the poet, but also of his wealth. Von Kremer thought this must be an exaggeration, but the Persian is probably correct[9]. In the letters the author appears in the character

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[1] Ibn Al-Athīr in his flimsy sketch of the history of Haleb (anno 402) calls 'Azīz al-daulah a Hamdanide, *but this is an error*

[2] Safadi, f 66 b, after Ghālib Ibn Al-Muhadhdhib, a historian of Ma'arrah

[3] Ibn Al-'Adīm, ut supra

[4] Safadi, l c

[5] Published by Rieu, l c

[6] Infra, p ١٣٠.

[7] Ibn Al-'Adīm (ut supra), anno 419

[8] Von Kremer, *Philosophische Gedichte*, ad fin

[9] Safadi quotes Abu Nasr Shākir of Ma'arrah (who was descended from Abu 'l-'Alā's family, and was secretary to Nūr al-dīn in Egypt) to the effect that Abu 'l-'Alā was offered the contents of the treasury in Ma'arrah lawfully, but refused to take them

of a liberal man, helping persons of his own rank with gifts[1]. Before 1021 the year 412 the poet Abu 'l-Hasan 'Ali son of 'Abd Al-Wāhid sent to him requesting a present of wine; this Abu 'l-'Alā's principles forbad 1029 him to send, but he sent some money instead[2]. In the year 420, as we have seen, he entertained the Kādi Abu Mohammad 'Abd Al-Wahhāb on his way from Egypt to Baghdad[3]. It is indeed unlikely that the disciples who crowded to Ma'arrah from distant countries to hear Abu 'l-'Alā left their teacher without some solid mark of their approbation In the best days of the Caliphate a student at Baghdad had paid 300 dinars annually to the grammarian Ibn Al-A'rābi for instruction in the subjects which Abu 'l-'Alā afterwards professed[4]. Although Ma'arrah was not Baghdad, and the fifth century was different from the second, it is difficult to suppose that Abu 'l-'Alā's 1047/8 instruction went entirely unrewarded[5]. Whether in 439, when Ma'arrah was taken by the Egyptian forces, the poet, who was then advanced in years, suffered or not, we do not know.

The long period of his retirement was spent, partly, as we have seen, in teaching; but chiefly in writing A certain Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Ali Ibn 'Abdallah Ibn Abi Hāshim acted as his amanuensis, taking no reward for his services[6]; it would be interesting to find memoirs by this Boswell, if he left any Another of the poet's helpers was named Abu 'l-Majd[7], perhaps the same Abu 'l-Majd who is mentioned by Bākharzi among the poets of Ma'arrah[8]. That it was not always easy to get amanuenses capable of satisfactorily executing such skilled labour as copying from his dictation, we learn from the letters[9], and could have guessed without them.

The long list of his works, now published after Al-Dhahabi[10], gives proof of great industry, although it would seem that Abu 'l-'Alā was disposed to overrate their quantity As has happened with many authors, the work of which he thought least was his most popular

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[1] Letter IX [2] Ibn Khallikan I 452

[3] Ibn Khall I 382, S Z II 140 [4] Aghāni V 55

[5] There are occasional references to presents received by the author in the letters, e g p 51

[6] Infra, p ١٣٥ [7] Infra, p 132. [8] British Museum MS [9] Infra, p 139

[10] Infra, pp ١٣٥, ١٣٦ Safadi also gives a list which in some respects may be more accurate than Dhahabi's See Appendix

production; the early poems which, with some few composed shortly after his return from Baghdad, were collected in a volume called *Sakt al-Zand*, or *Primitiae*[1], both won and retained a degree of popularity which none of his other books ever secured. Tabrīzi, in the preface to his commentary on them[2], states that on coming to Maʿarrah he requested the author to read them with him; but this Abu 'l-ʿAlā refused to do, on the ground that he had 'boasted' in them (after the fashion of Arabic poets)[3], and that his mature performances were better worth study. Tabrīzi nevertheless composed a commentary explaining them, which is not the only commentary on them, nor the best[4] The number of MS. copies of the Sakt al-Zand in European libraries is evidence of their undiminished popularity, rhetoricians[5] frequently illustrate from them the elegances of style; and a poet of the eighth century of Islam[6] took the trouble to turn into a eulogy of the Prophet Mohammed one of the odes in the Sakt al-Zand[7], in which the irreverence of the poet Mutanabbi had been imitated or outdone.

The best known of Abu 'l-ʿAlā's works after the Sakt al-Zand is the large collection of poems called *Luzūmiyyāt*, from the nature of the versification, in which every verse of a poem is made to rhyme in two consonants instead of one, whereby the difficulty of manipulation, which in all the Arabic metres is considerable, is very greatly increased. These poems were composed at intervals during the third period of Abu 'l-ʿAlā's long life, but were edited and elucidated by himself. Their contents are well known in Europe from the repeated descriptions of them by Von Kremer. For the most part they consist of pessimistic and ascetic reflexions in the style of Abu 'l-ʿAtāhiyah; of thoughts on death and the mutability of fortune, and exhortations to virtue and humility Many passages however are devoted to the promulgation of the poet's peculiar tenets, called by his biographers

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[1] The latest poem was composed 420 A H

[2] Bodleian MS

[3] The poem to which he refers is probably S Z I 65 Ibn Hujjah in his Ta'hīl quotes examples of successful *Iftikhār* (boasting) from Abu 'l-ʿAlā (Margin of Muhādarāt of Rāghib II 312–313)

[4] The author of the Tanwīr severely criticizes Tabrīzi's work Cf Hājji Khalīfah

[5] See especially Ibn Hujjah's Khizānat al-adab

[6] Ibn Al-Wardi, see Ibn Hujjah, ut supra, p 382

[7] S Z I 30

Brahminism, and identified by modern authorities with the opinions of the Jainas, which the author may have learned at Baghdad, or possibly during his earlier travels. Three doctrines in particular are deserving of notice (1) He is strongly of opinion that animals should not be slaughtered for food, or injured in any way, to let go a flea he regards as a more virtuous act than to give a dirhem to a beggar[1]. The biographers associate his adoption of this doctrine with his return from Baghdad, and the evidence of the letters is in favour of that assertion[2]. (2) He approves strongly of the Indian practice of cremation, it must be added, on practical grounds[3]. (3) He is anxious for extinction[4], in the real sense of that word, and not in that with which we are familiar from the writings of the Sufis.

Besides these themes, the Luzūmiyyāt contain the poet's opinions on a variety of subjects; but what attracted most attention, both when they were first issued, and when they came to be studied by Europeans, were the passages in which the doctrines and institutions not only of the Jews and Christians, but even of the poet's own co-religionists are ridiculed or made light of Several of these passages were picked out by those who wished to prove the author a heretic; and these were copied by Abu 'l-Fidā in his history, and thence became known in Europe The passages in the Luzūmiyyāt in which the author speaks as a pious Moslem, as, e g., where he goes so far as to advocate religious intolerance[5], or where he from the standpoint of a believer in the future life tells the 'naturalist and the physician,' who deny it, that if they are right, it will be no worse for him, whereas, if he be right, it will be worse for them[6], were naturally neglected Owing to the unorthodox passages, and also owing to the fact that Abu 'l-'Alā took up the challenge of the Koran, and wrote a rival work, which he thought only required 'to be polished by the tongues of four centuries of readers' to be equal to the sacred volume[7], the question of the poet's orthodoxy became the subject of considerable discussion[8]. Confronted

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[1] Ed Eg I 212

[2] Ṣafadi quotes verses by several writers controverting this opinion of Abu 'l-'Alā

[3] Ed Eg I 235

[4] Ibid p 374

[5] Luzūmiyyāt, ed Bomb, p 296 med

[6] Ibid p 243

[7] Infra, p ١٣٢

[8] The other works supposed to be tainted with heresy were the عمران and the استعفر

with the charge of heresy, Abu 'l-ʿAlā replied to one of his accusers that the charge was false, and had been started by persons who envied him[1], which reply led to the retort that there was little to envy about a man who had forfeited both worlds. Another anecdote is interesting, as taking us into the poet's lecture-room. A poet of Maʿarrah, of little repute, called Abu 'l-Kāsim Al-Muḳri[2], entered the room, and was requested by the lecturer to read—the subject was apparently the Koran. The new-comer read the verse 'Whoso is blind in this world shall be even blinder and more lost in the next[3],' with evident reference to Abu 'l-ʿAlā's misfortune and the rumours current about him. When the lecture was over, Abu 'l-ʿAlā complimented him on his orthodoxy, but sent him away with a biting epigram[4].

Not all however judged Abu 'l-ʿAlā quite so harshly. One of his pupils, who afterwards acquired a great reputation for sanctity, and who belonged to the same family as had helped Abu 'l-ʿAlā when at Baghdad, when asked on his return from Maʿarrah what he thought of his teacher's orthodoxy, expressed himself satisfied with it[5]. Another, who afterwards attained the post of Ḳādi, or judge, declared that he had heard Abu 'l-ʿAlā, at a time when he fancied no one was by, recite the Koran in a way which left no doubt of the reality of his belief[6]. Eminent Syrians as well as savants of other countries in later times wrote books in defence of the poet[7].

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[1] Infra, p ١٣٢. The same story is told by Ibn Khallikan I 55. The author complains of the envy of his contemporaries elsewhere, e g. S Z II 45.

[2] Dhahabi, in his notice of this person (British Museum MS).

[3] XVII 34.

[4] هذا ابو القاسم اعجوبة * لكل من يدرى ولا يدرى
لا يحسن الشعر ولا يحفظ الـ * ـقرآن وهو الشاعر المقرى

[5] Ibn Khallikan I 437.

[6] Infra, p ١٣٤. The discussion of the author's orthodoxy in Safadi is fuller than elsewhere.

[7] So Ibn Al-ʿAdīm, who said that all who attacked the poet had never met him, while all those who had come in contact with him admired him. His book was called *Al-ʿAdl wal-Taharri*, &c. Another work by an unknown author was called *Dafʿ al-maʿarrah ʿan shaykh Al-Maʿarrah* (preface to S Z, p 3). Ibn Al-ʿAdīm's work is mentioned by the author of F W. in his notice of the Aleppine scholar. The work of Sadr al-dīn Al-Silafi (472–576, if Ibn Khallikan is to be believed) called *Memoirs of Abu 'l-ʿAlā Al-Maʿarri*, which is probably the source of the stray anecdotes that have been collected from Ibn Khallikan, was not, apparently, of an apologetic character. Silafi was a pupil of Tabrīzi, and so had good opportunities of

Still the passages in the Luzūmiyyāt remained; and the explanation given of them saved the poet's orthodoxy at the expense of his ability. His eccentric opinions were attributed to the necessities of the difficult metre in which he wrote[1]. And in general, it may be added, although Eastern writers respect the ingenuity of the Luzūmiyyāt, and the great command of the Arabic language which they display, they regard the contents as 'poor stuff[2].' It was therefore a rise in the world for these poems when the Austrian critic, Hammer-Purgstall, declared that their author showed himself in them to be a philosopher as well as a great poet[3]. Little value was indeed assigned to Hammer-Purgstall's opinion but a writer of great authority, Von Kremer, made them the subject of repeated study, and in his most exhaustive treatise on them declares that Abu 'l-'Alā was many centuries before his time[4] The value of Von Kremer's essays will be acknowledged even by those who regard his estimate as seriously exaggerated. That there are suggestions contained in this Dīwān which are remarkable for the age in which it was composed need not be denied· but it is very clear that the author was unconscious of their value, unable to follow them out, and unable to adhere to them consistently. The Mohammedan critics who thought he let his opinions be guided by his pen probably came near the truth. And any man who writes in such fetters as the metre of the Luzūmiyyāt imposes can exercise but slight control over his thoughts.

Some more of his poems were yet more artificial in character than the Luzūmiyyāt; and one epigram in this style is preserved[5]. A work called *Forgiveness* would also appear to be in existence, and to be remarkable in character. Of his philological writings we possess the first half of his commentary on Mutanabbi[6], which was superseded by later works, which however mention it honourably. 'A worthy

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gaining information A considerable portion of Dhahabi's narrative comes from Silafi also Safadi quotes a work by Abu Nasr Shākir of Ma'arrah, who was Kātib al-inshā in Egypt to Nūr al-dīn, and who belonged to the family of Abu 'l-'Alā

[1] So Ibn Hujjah, Khizānat al-adab, p 435 Cf infra, p ١٣٦.

[2] So Abu 'l-Fidā, l c

[3] *Litteraturgeschichte der Araber*, l c

[4] *Philosophische Gedichte*

[5] Thamarāt al-Aurāk (margin of the Mustatraf) I 90

[6] MS of the British Museum

man,' according to Dhahabi, having seen a work of Abu 'l-'Alā in 101 volumes, called *The Wood and the Branches*, thought that work rendered all other books superfluous[1]. Otherwise the great bulk of the works, fifty-five in number, which Abu 'l-'Alā composed seem to have been little known outside Ma'arrah. A writer who died in 646 asserted that the greater number of them perished when Ma'arrah was attacked by the 'Infidels,' meaning doubtless when it was captured in 492 by the Crusaders, in whose hands it remained till 529[2]; but the writer of the copy of Dhahabi in the British Museum, probably of the ninth century A H, states that he himself had seen the greater number of them in Egypt.

The letters which are here published with translation belong to a collection made by the poet himself out of his correspondence, to which he added a handbook, which would be of great use, if it could be found. The collection made by the author was much more considerable in size, according to him it occupied 800 quires or 16,000 pages[3], and although Dhahabi points out that Abu 'l-'Alā's 'quires' consisted not of twenty pages, but of eight or perhaps four, the lowest estimate would give us a work of 3,200 pages, some sixteen times the size of the Leyden MS, the pages of which contain no great amount. Abu 'l-'Alā's estimate doubtless included some lengthy compositions, of which one specimen still exists at Leyden[4], and also some private letters, not to be found in the Leyden MS, which there is nevertheless some reason for supposing to be still in existence. Perhaps, too, it included a highly interesting correspondence on religious and philosophical topics carried on between the author and a certain 'Hibat Allah son of Musa son of 'Imrān,' who, having read in Egypt one of the poems in the Luzūmiyyāt[5], in which the author proclaimed his vegetarian and ascetic views most emphatically, wrote to Ma'arrah to ask for spiritual medicine[6]. This correspondence was excerpted by Yākūt in his *Dictionary of Littérateurs*. The assertion of the editor of

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[1] Infra, p ١٣٧

[2] Ibn Khallikan I 42 Walpole, *Ansayrii* I 200, gives a pathetic account of the taking of Ma'arrah from the historians of the Crusades

[3] Infra, p ١٣٩ Safadi says 200 quires

[4] The Letter of the 'Angels' See the Catalogue, ed 2, I 194

[5] Ed Eg I 232

[6] Safadi

the copy whence both the Leyden and the Beyrut MSS are derived that 'the poet's correspondence was not large' is therefore erroneous.

The occasions which led to the composition of several of these documents have already come under our notice: one or two others refer to literary schemes or literary matters, we learn that Abu 'l-'Alā was not only visited by disciples, but that his help was sought by persons in need of books, and that literary projects were submitted to him by persons doubtless willing and able to remunerate them; and though in Letter XXXVI he expresses doubts about his ability to abridge Kalīlah wa-Dimnah for 'Azīz al-daulah, we learn from the catalogue of his writings that he actually carried this project out. Letters II and XXVII also are connected with books; and the authors who are congratulated in them must have felt flattered by the intimate acquaintance which Abu 'l-'Alā displays with their writings. Letter XXVII is not only extraordinarily learned, but also gives some interesting observations on metrical questions which the ordinary handbooks pass over. The longest, Letter XXX, as a letter of consolation challenges comparison with the many classical attempts that have been made to deal with this subject. A writer somewhat later than Abu 'l-'Alā, Ibn 'Abdūn, in composing a poetical letter of condolence[1], adopts the same line as Abu 'l-'Alā, i.e he endeavours to make a characteristic list of persons who had died before, and hence gives a sketch of universal history. There is no great originality about this idea, which was anticipated by Lucretius. The first part of Abu 'l-'Alā's list is little more than a paraphrase in rhymed prose of some chapters of Ibn Ḳutaibah's *Manual of History* The second part, containing descriptions of the animals that die, is closely modelled on earlier performances by Arabic writers, in particular a poem by an author called Dīk al-Jinn, of which a large fragment is preserved in the Aghānī[2]. The accounts of the animals are taken from many authors[3], especially the Hudhalite poets and Farazdaḳ The concluding part of the epistle however rises to warm and affecting eloquence, of which it may be hoped that all the force is not lost in the translation.

Those letters which have not been noticed are private and domestic

[1] Published by Dozy

[2] Aghānī XII 147

[3] The description of the lion seems modelled on that by Ibn Kais Al-Rukayyāt, Aghānī IV 162

in character, and can be paralleled from the correspondence of the other eminent letter-writers, as well as from the ordinary collections of poems. In all the style is highly artificial, and the employment of proverbs[1] and idioms carried to a degree which even native taste might not approve. It is a style which is as far as possible removed from European ideas of letter-writing in the nineteenth century; but it has a good deal in common with the elegant epistle of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries[2].

The most striking characteristics of the epistolary style are three—the verbosity of the prœms, the artificial and pedantic character of the language, and the rhyme. The epistolary style, possibly in all three points, is said to have been started by Abu Ghālib ʿAbd Al-Hamīd[3] (ob. 132), the secretary of the last Umayyad Caliph, Marwān, whose epistles were at one time greatly admired, and served as models to later epistolographers. The employment of choice or even obsolete diction in letters addressed to eminent persons is however earlier than Abu Ghālib's time; one of the correspondents of Hajjāj in the first century, according to an oft-quoted anecdote, employed a philological expert to select phrases for him[4]; and those compositions which were intended not only to convey a message of immediate importance, but to have permanent literary value, had a tendency to get more and more obscure; and thus the letters of Jāhiz which had a high reputation in the third century were criticized by Abu 'l-Fadl of Hamadhan in the fourth as wanting in artifice[5]. Abu 'l-Fadl indeed boasted that he could employ no less than 400 different artifices in his epistles[6], many of which had already been tried in poetry by Razīn the metrician, while others ascribed their introduction to a yet earlier writer, Ibn Harmah[7]. These artifices were however rarely employed but as experiments, and in the manipulation of them Abu 'l-Fadl was outdone by his successor Hariri.

Long before Abu 'l-ʿAlā's time an elaborate system of conventions had been devised, whereby the mode of address differed with the rank

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[1] Letter VII is in parts little else than a cento of proverbs.

[2] Bentley, in the preface to the *Dissertation on Phalaris*, asks if proverbs may not be used in epistles, where may they be used?

[3] Ibn Khallikan I 386. [4] Kāmil I 164. [5] Zahr al-Ādāb II 100.

[6] Letters, margin of Ibn Hujjah's Khizānat al-adab, p 61. [7] Aghānī IV 106.

of the individual addressed. As Letter IV is an apology for pitching a former letter (Letter III?) too high, it is interesting to read the rules on this subject given in a handbook some hundred years earlier than the letter to which reference has been made 'There is a convention,' says the author of the 'Umdah[1], 'that the most honourable form of initial greeting is *God prolong our lord*, and the next most honourable *God prolong the existence of my lord*. They regard it as a blemish to vary the mode of address in different parts of the same letter, and think any one who does so a rustic; I mean for a man to write first *God prolong the existence of our* or *my lord*, and to say in the course of the letter *God accomplish your hopes*, and *if you think fit*' . 'There is a convention that when a man addresses his equal he should say *so, if you think fit to do so and so, you will do it*, not *then please yourself;* but if the person addressed be slightly below the writer, he may say *then please yourself* or *I desire that you should do so and so*, but if he be considerably below the writer in station, he should write *then it behoves you to do so and so*, if he be lower still, he should write *then do so and so*.' The letters not only of Abu 'l-'Alā but of the other writers of the time show that attention had to be paid to this etiquette[2]

The employment of rhymed prose in letters seems to have become regular and normal in the fourth century, but had been frequent far earlier. This mode of composition[3] would seem properly to belong to solemn utterances such as oracles, religious formulae[4], prayers[5], and elogia[6], and from the third of these uses its employment in addresses to princes, whether written or delivered orally[7], does not differ materially The author of the Aghānī quotes lengthy encomia in rhymed prose, pronounced by poets both before pre-Mohammedan[8] and post-Mohammedan[9] princes, and although the genuineness of the

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[1] 'Umdah of Abu Ja'far, Bodleian MS

[2] The title 'most glorious' (اجلّ) given the author by Abu 'l-Hasan Ibn Sinān (infra, p 140), implied very great distinction, the Sharīf Al-Radī wrote a long poem to Bahā al-daulah, thanking him for substituting *ajall* for *jalīl* (Dīwān, p 752)

[3] See the discussion on rhymed prose in Jāhiz, Tibyān I 111-113, it would seem that Mohammed discouraged its use, but that its popularity won the day

[4] Aghānī III 6 [5] Jāhiz, Tibyān II 82 [6] Ibid II 30

[7] Aghānī XIV 136 [8] Ibid XIV 3 [9] Ibid XV 118

former composition is more than doubtful, the opinion of this very learned writer who regards such a composition as no anachronism is worthy of consideration It is probable however that it was employed in addresses from men to their superiors long before it became usual in letters between equals; and thus we find no trace of it in the famous correspondence between the Caliph Al-Mansūr and 'Īsā Ibn Mūsā[1], and that between the same Caliph and Mohammed Ibn Al-Hasan[2], but the letter to Hārūn Al-Rashid's minister, which according to Al-Jāhiz was known by heart by the people of Baghdad[3], was in rhyme throughout, and the fact that Al-Jāḥiz wrote letters in simple prose[4] may perhaps have occasioned the criticism of his style to which reference has been made It may be observed however that the ablest writers are not slaves to the rhyme, but occasionally, for variety or some other effect, abandon it

Abu 'l-'Alā died in 449 at an advanced age, after three days' illness. 1058 Many men of letters attended his funeral, and many dirges were composed in his honour, of some of which fragments remain Dhahabi's biography contains some interesting notices of visits paid to his tomb, which seems to have survived the storming of Ma'arrah by the Franks, but of which recent explorers seem to have found no trace For those who were curious about the final doom of this free-thinker, 'a worthy man' recounted a dream in which Abu 'l-'Alā's terrible fate was revealed to him[5]; while his admirers in their turn ascribed to him an escape from the hands of the governor of Haleb by means only to be paralleled from the histories of Elijah and Elisha[6]. Neither his letters nor the rest of his published writings seem to make any allusion to his two brothers, Mohammed and Abu 'l-Haitham, who are both said to have acquired some fame as poets[7]

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[1] Tabari III 341 [2] Kāmil II. ad fin [3] Jāhiz, Tibyān II 114

[4] Zahr al-Ādāb II. 95 [5] Infra, p ١٣٢.

[6] Preface to S Z, p 3 Safadi tells the same story at greater length.

[7] Safadi after Ibn Al-'Adīm and Yāḳūt

DATES OF THE CHIEF EVENTS IN ABU 'L-'ALĀ'S LIFE.

A. H.

363 Rabi' I 28, Abu 'l-'Alā born
Sa'd al-daulah takes Haleb

370–380 Abu 'l-'Alā visits various Syrian towns.

381 Death of Sa'd al-daulah. Accession of Sa'īd al-daulah.
Al-Maghribi sent to Haleb.

386 Ma'arrah revolts from Haleb.

392 Death of Sa'īd al-daulah. Lu'lu' puts his infant son on the throne.

394 Lu'lu' with his son Murtadā al-daulah undertakes the government

398 Journey to Baghdad

399 Death of Lu'lu' Accession of Murtadā al-daulah.

400 Abu 'l-'Alā returns from Baghdad. His mother dies.

407 'Azīz al-daulah governor of Haleb.

412 'Azīz al-daulah killed

414 Sanad al-daulah governor of Haleb; ousted by Sālih Ibn Mirdās.

418 Ma'arrah visited by Sālih

420 Sālih killed His son Shibl al-daulah governor

429 Muntakhab al-daulah governor of Haleb and Syria

433 Death of Muntakhab al-daulah. Mu'izz al-daulah, son of Sālih, governor of Haleb

439 Ma'arrah taken by the Egyptians.

449 Makīn al-daulah governor of Haleb
Rabi' I, death of Abu 'l-'Alā

LETTERS OF ABU 'L-'ALĀ AL-MA'ARRI.

Letters of Abu 'l-'Alā Ahmad son of Abdallah of the tribe of Tanūkh, the Blind, the twice-bound captive[1], with other fragments of his writings. p 3

Note —His correspondence was not copious, being merely occasional

LETTER I [Before 399 A H]

To Abu 'l-Kāsim Al-Husain *son of* 'Ali Al-Maghribi[2]. *This letter is known as* 'THE SCENT OF THE LOSING NUMBER[3].' (5)

If scholarship (God give your honour a long life!) emits any fragrance, or wit any flame, even at this distance[4] we have felt the perfume of your scholarship, and your wit has turned our darkness into day, it has suspended

[1] After his return to Ma'arrah, he shut himself up in his house, as we shall see in Letter VII &c The two prisons to which this name refers are his seclusion and his blindness In Luz p 201 (Eg) he speaks of *three* prisons, including his body among them Compare Luz p 212 (Bomb), where he speaks of his 'three nights,' the third being want of religion and guidance

[2] A distinguished contemporary, 370–418 A H , whose biography is given by Ibn Khallikan (I 195, ed Boulāk), whose notice however, like the references in Ibn Al-Athīr's history, deals with a period after the date of this letter, which is fixed within certain limits by the references to Al-Maghribi's residence in Egypt According to Al-Dhahabi (MS of the British Museum) the father of the person addressed, also named Abu 'l-Kāsim, was born in Ḥaleb, where he became Vizier to the governor Sa'd al-daulah (son of Saif al-daulah), whom he helped to defeat the Greeks in 371, but having fallen out with Sa'd al-daulah, he in 380 joined the latter's enemy Bakjūr, then supreme at Rakkah He played a double game with Bakjūr, and when the latter invaded Ḥaleb, finding his counsel neglected, escaped before Bakjūr's defeat

[3 4 See next page]

on our ears ornaments never to be detached, and kindled in the secret (10) chambers of our hearts stars that will never set. For to us, the inhabitants of this town[5], a great honour has been given, and 'there has been delivered unto us an honourable missive[6];' proceeding from the residence of the great Doctor, who holds the reins of prose and verse[7], a missive which it is an act

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to Rakkah, but on Sa'd al-daulah's approach fled to Kūfah, and thence to Al-'Azīz, Fatimite Caliph in Egypt, who in the following year (381) sent him as adviser to the general whom he entrusted with the invasion of Ḥaleb. He would seem to have remained in the neighbourhood of Haleb some years, intriguing with the inhabitants against his fellow-commander, and it is probably during this period that the services which Abu 'l-'Alā acknowledges were rendered. He was finally recalled by Al-'Azīz, but seems to have been restored to favour by his successor Al-Ḥākim (386–411), for under this prince his son was given control of the Dīwān al-Sawād, whence he was ejected through the influence of Mansūr Ibn 'Abdūn, and though he gained a temporary advantage over Mansūr, the latter, coming to power again, caused the death of Al-Maghribi and his son Mohammed, about A. H. 399, Al-Husain escaping. These details are taken from the fragmentary history of Haleb called *Al-yawākit wal-darab* (MS. Marsh 36), and the valuable 'Appendix to the History of Damascus' (MS. Hunt. 126); both these seem to confuse the father with the son. After the murder of his father and brother (which he deplores in verses cited by the geographer Yākūt, and more fully in the Appendix quoted) Al-Ḥusain escaped to Arabia, and there stirred up another descendant of 'Ali, named Abu 'l-Futūh, to endeavour to oust Al-Hākim. Failing in this plot, he fled to 'Irāk, where he obtained the patronage of Abu Ghālib Fakhr al-mulk, who however, owing to the representations of the Caliph Al-Kādir, was compelled to discharge him, when he became secretary for a time to Kirwāsh at Mausil. In 414 he became Vizier to Musharrif al-daulah at Baghdad, but held this office for ten months only, and having again given offence to the Caliph, he took refuge with Ibn Marwān at Diyārbakr. He died at Miyyāfārikīn. The character given him by Ibn Al-Athīr (anno 414) is bad; 'he was low-minded, deceitful, and envious.'

[3] The title is derived from the opening words, and the allusion on p. 4, l. 9. The word means literally the arrow which got no share of the camel for which the arrows were tossed in the celebrated pre-Islamic game referred to, of which most of the introductions to the study of Arabic contain some account.

[4] The distance between Ma'arrah and Egypt.

[5] It would seem that a public letter had been addressed to Ma'arrah by Al-Maghribi. According to MS. Marsh 36, when in 386 the Egyptian forces were besieging Haleb, Ma'arrah, which was in the territory of Ḥaleb, joined the Egyptians; it was attacked by the Halebites, but rescued by an Egyptian force. It is probable that the connexion of Al-Maghribi with this town began at that time.

[6] Koran XXVII. 9, referring to Solomon's letter to the Queen of Sheba.

[7] Although the anthologer Al-Bakharzi says that the passages in Abu 'l-'Alā's letters first called his attention to the eminence of Al-Maghribi as a writer, the phrase used is scarcely an exaggeration. More than two and a half centuries later he is still spoken of as 'the perfect Vizier' by the geographer Yākūt, who refers to the work spoken of in the following letter as an authority on questions of language; while fine verses of his are quoted by

of piety to read, and whose peroration, or rather whose entirety, is frankincense. 'Imitate it who can[1]!' It is too grand to be kissed[2], kisses are for its shadow: p. 4 too precious to be handed about, let that be done with copies! For us it is a sort of Sacred Book! Were we not so chary of its witty contents, and so afraid of its ink running, and the light of its ideas being blurred, every mouth would have hastened to kiss it, and every nose to inhale its perfume. Its lines would have become the cherry-colour on the lips, the scar produced by prostration[3] on the (5) brow. Were it not, too, that our religion forbids gambling, and reprehends the practices of our ignorant forefathers,—were it not, in other words, that the code of Islam objects to the tossing of the arrows, we should have tossed for it with the seven that win, and the three that lose. But sound sense[4] forefend that the eager and interested mind should be satisfied with the decision of the winning and losing arrows! And the friends of my lord (God give his enemies the shooting stars[5] and the Debaran[6]!) could only cast lots for hanging the letter in their (10) houses that they might have it for a constant companion, not to obtain portions of that written parchment. They would only throw for it the sort of lots that were thrown by the Rabbis for the guardianship of the Virgin[7], or that would settle which of the Prophet's wives were to accompany him on a journey[8]. O how grand a document, the honour of which will make us surpass our rivals evermore! Adorned with every gem that is sweeter than new-made wine, and fairer than genuine coin! Appearing like a flash of lightning, or a rising sun! I have never ceased yearning for a sight of your honour as the captive girl yearns

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Ibn Khallikan and others. Extracts from his letters are given as models of style in the *Matla' al-Fawā'id* of Ibn Nubātah (ob. 768).

[1] Koran LXXXIII. 26.

[2] The custom of kissing letters is not unfrequently alluded to. See e. g. Letters of Hamadhani, Beyrut ed. p. 334.

[3] In Koran XLVIII. 28 the Believers are said to show a mark on their foreheads produced by constant prostration. The authorities are in doubt whether it should be a discolouring of the skin or an actual scar. The Koran asserts that this description of the Believers is to be found in the Gospel and the Law, perhaps referring in the former case to Rev. vii. 3.

[4] In Koran LII. 32 'sound sense' is personified. The phrase has a flavour of impiety.

[5] Explained by the Koran as discharged against the Jinn who endeavoured to pry into the heavenly counsels.

[6] This constellation was considered unlucky, Kazwīni I. 77. In Aghāni XVII. 158 a poet says that after some one's death the good luck has all left the Su'ūd and attached itself to Al-Debaran.

[7] Koran III. 39. The *Protevangelium Jacobi Minoris*, c. ix, is the source of this story.

[8] This is not mentioned in the ordinary Lives of the Prophet.

(15) after the life of the pampered beauty, or as those who are stricken with sickness yearn after the dawn of health. Could my desire for your honour but take shape and form—could it enter into a body and be examined—it would fill the world in both directions, and occupy the whole space between heaven and earth. It would not rest satisfied till it had forced its stride to cover a valley, and its hand to spread out like a plain.

I have received your greeting, which if it passed by a flinty rock would (20) moisten it, or by a bare tree would give it leaves: and the joy of it set me as it were on the horns of an antelope, or the wings of a sparrow. I felt as though I had been uplifted by the pole, or addressed by an angel—so elated was I with what, were an alteration of one's nature possible, would have metamorphosed me from my humble birth to a man of exalted pedigree, as an elixir might turn a quicksilvered coin into a mass of fine gold. Indeed, were it not for the dangers which encompass this place, and all hearts being possessed by the fire of thirst[1], I might have thought your greeting that which is mentioned by the Blessed (25) Creator, when he says, 'Enter it with greeting, safely[2].' Is then our township Paradise, or have its inhabitants been granted forgiveness? Have they been p. 5 restored to life after burial, or 'been recompensed with the seventh heaven for their patience, and are they receiving therein greeting and salutation[3]?' Still, though through your favour they have received some of the privileges of the blessed saints, one characteristic of the damned is to be found with them, and that is that they are torn by the demon of rhetoric, that they are tongue-tied by its cords, and rendered dumb You might think they had heard the words, 'This is a day whereon they shall not speak, nor leave be given to them to make excuse[4]' Really they are silent because they are drowned in your wit, and the flashes of your eloquence have rendered them speechless The pen of their ready (5) writer has become the stick wherewith a bewildered man scratches the ground[5], and the ready response of their orators has turned into the silence of amazement. Fain would they have rounded an answer, but they have been checked; they became aware of your superiority and acknowledged it, looking up from their camels' kneeling-places they espied you among the thrones on the constellations, and their ambition excited them to approach you, but they failed and they promised their minds that they would be foolish, and were as good as their word.

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[1] The scarcity of water at Ma'arrah is insisted on by the geographers See also Letter XX

[2] Koran XV 46 [3] Koran XXV 75 [4] Koran LXXVII 35, 36

[5] Compare Swayne, *Seventeen Trips through Somaliland*, p 87 'Then he looked down and began absent-mindedly scratching the earth with a bit of stick' Cf Tabari III 307

A camel's track is not to be found in an eagle's nest; so they may ponder on (10) your brilliant flashes, and thank God for having given your honour the power of reducing the sea to a 'traitorous' pond by the subtlety of your conceits, and increasing the smallest star in the tail of the Great Bear to the size of the full moon. Now a resolute man on foot is faster any day than the man who is mounted on a jade; but faster than either must he be whose resolution has mounted him on the wind's back, and whose lucky star has secured him success; whose Creator (hallowed be his name!) has provided him with a capacity that has broken in every restive subject, and made it docile, and tamed and disciplined every savage phrase, so that the rough places of the Arabic tongue become plain (15) when he uses it, and its weak points, aided by his art, become strong and vigorous, so that he is quite like the busy bee which feeds on bugloss and then fills the scoops, and which turns the canary-seed by feeding on it into honey· which culls the bitter flowers, to change them into sweetness when the time for hiving comes. Or like the air in a system which I do not believe[1], though others may approve of it, which, attracting particles of vapour, rains them in sweet showers on those below. And oh, if only a polished style could be imitated as (20) a handwriting can be! Should we not exercise our wits with riding unbroken steeds of style, till perchance they yielded some polished paragraph, or succeeded in extracting some pearl of speech? Albeit it is a troublesome task to beg of the stingy, and to teach the old[2]; and the moon's station[3] in the Virgin is further than a chamois can leap; and the lightning is too quick for the fingers of a pickpocket, and the sun is too grand to be deposited in a tomb, and though the hare were to practise the whole of its life, its cry would not sound like a lion's roar, and a line of motes has not the tenacity of a line of hemp. O that your person (25) might last as long as your writings! You would then be immortal; and fortune would give you a safe-conduct You are, indeed, the most suitable person to light the lamp of culture, planted as you are in the nursery of high-mindedness, p 6 and in contact with the branches of wisdom ever since you grew up, so that you have risen to the top of the tree, while your rivals have shown the white feather[4].

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[1] Probably the philosophy of the Greek schools

[2] Maydānī II 264

[3] Three small stars; 'they rise on the 18th of December, and set on the 16th of April' (Kazwīnī)

[4] Literally, 'have ridden the roots of the *sakhbar*,' a species of schoenanthum The phrase occurs in a verse of Hassān Ibn Thābit, but the connexion of the plant with treachery is not clear. The theory that its roots were infested by snakes is more probable than that which derives the phrase from the supposed unsteadiness of the tree

Now among men of bygone days there were some who employed epistles as links[1], and adorned themselves with rhyme as a young horse does with a trot; but none of them have risen to your eminence, nor even set foot upon your path. They differed in style without being distinguished, and they had contests[2] but won no prizes. Had they wanted to attain to such compositions (5) as these, they might have substituted a life of hardship for one of dignity, have trudged on many a hard road, and eaten much humble pie, ere they could attain what you have attained without trouble or expense. And each of them, had they seen you, would have been right glad to be the last horse in the race in which you came in first, or the butt-end of the lance of which you were the head.

Now when your servant Moses arrived, bringing these welcome guests, these (10) precious necklets—they seemed like the nine signs which God gave to Amram's son, to dissolve the spell of the magicians, and sweep off the chaff of the poet. On his tables there came two rods, the poems rhyming in *m* and *w* respectively. You found in your country various lengthy metres disporting themselves, various intellectual sand-heaps collapsing[3], 'then Moses cast down his rod, and behold it swallowed up their devices[4].' I speak only of what I know, and testify to that which I have proved. In what I have heard I have witnessed the compression (15) of ideas into brief verses like the image of Kisrā in the drinking cups[5], or the effigy of Caesar on the golden coins[6]. You are not humiliated by the straitness of your quarters; your love-verses are like the throbbing of the lyre; your grave periods like the reverberation of the thunder. You indeed—long may the earth boast of you—may think little of what we make much of, and depreciate the learning which we prize, but so do the cattle marvel how the kite can perch himself on the pinnacle of a castle, while the kite thinks little of his performance (20) and regards it as no great flight. Still if our weak minds have some spurt left, and the vessel of our intelligence some trace of polish, they may get some good out of you (God bless you!), and shine with rays borrowed from you, as copper shines when it faces the bright luminaries. The reflexion of the Great Bear, lofty

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[1] Such as Abu 'l-Fadl Al-Hamadhānī and Abu Bakr Al-Khwārizmī.

[2] Such a contest is described at length in Abu 'l-Fadl's letters.

[3] The phrase is from Jamīl (Aghānī VII 97). [4] Koran XXVI 44.

[5] References to cups with an image of Kisrā at the bottom are not uncommon, see Kāmil of Mubarrad, ed. Eg. II 95, Wr. p. 515, where several verses are quoted on this subject. Sābūr is said to have been recognized at a banquet by his image being on the cup (Thamarāt Al-Aurāk I. 169).

[6] Of course there were none on the Mohammedan coins.

as it is, may yet be seen in the water of a pool; by the blessing of the Su'ūd[1] the wood will produce leaves; and the puddles will swell when the moon is in the Lion's Brow[2]. (25) Could the lifeless speak, or the lowly be proud, Ma'arrah would spread its sails and rear its crest, glorying in the fact of your bestowing on it even a vexed and angry glance, supposing you did not speak of it in terms of studied (p 7) praise[3]. Leaving it, you are like a living body transferred from the shell to the air; while Ma'arrah is left like the coquette's perfume-pot, when the perfume is gone and only the receptacle remains. Its only title to be respected more than other cities in the vicinity lies in your residing there during those days, and lulling to sleep the eyes of famine[4] that were gazing on its inhabitants; (5) since which time Ma'arrah is known by you and takes rank from you, as indeed happens to every dwelling you inhabit, for the abodes wherein you take up your residence are like those northern and southern constellations, twenty-eight in number, which only are famous because the moon takes up its quarters in them, and to which in consequence the Arabs ascribe every rain-bringing mist Many a shining sphere there is in the blue ether which, because the moon avoids it in its orbit, has no renown, neither gets credit for any drop that ever drizzled from a cloud

(10) It is, I feel, incumbent upon a serious student to make the places where your feet have trod (hard luck to your enemies!) shrines of learning and gathering places for ardent devotees, just as a pious posterity turns the places where sainted ancestors have walked into temples of choice purity and mosques favoured for their associations As Sinai derives its fame from Moses, and the Stone at Meccah from Abraham, so might we through being your neighbours, before conversing with you, have enjoyed honour similar to that which accrues to the inhabitant of Medinah from the neighbourhood of the Prophet! (15) It may be that Ma'arrah has taken a correct, or rather indisputable view of the matter, and perceived that you are too fine a necklace for her neck, too grand a bracelet for her wrist, too massive a crown for her head, too bright a star for her horizon, and indeed you are like a pearl transferred from the shell to the head of a mighty king, while your former home is like a tree after the fruit is plucked, an oyster without the jewel, a quiver without the arrows, a rain-cloud without the rain.

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[1] The constellation Sa'd Al-Su'ūd (Feb 12–Aug 14) The Arabs connected its rising with the beginning of vegetation (Kazwīnī).

[2] The constellation which rises Aug 14, to which copious rain is ascribed (Kazwīnī).

[3] The reading in the text is probably right From the note on Hamāsah, p. 427, we learn that the author interpreted the verb سمد as a synonym of سهم 'to change colour.' On the other hand the Beyrut ed rightly inserts the words وان كان before لا.

[4] Cf. page 2, note 5.

(20) Now we know well that the rain is imprisoned in a cell of fog, and that the flower is more honourable than the stalk which bears it: the moon was not created for the benefit of the darkness. The borrower should not regard the loan as a gift, or think it a shame to have to restore it to its lender; on the contrary, it is an honour to a poor man to be allowed to borrow from a king. Now this region won far-reaching fame and held the reins of fair fortune, what time happy circumstances placed it in your hands, and virtue entrusted it to the noble (25) qualities of your heart and tongue so now that you are departed your odour still remains, and the tent of your fame is still standing though you yourself are gone, and Ma'arrah is like the two months called Spring, which originally were at the beginning of the year, but afterwards shifted to the middle, and two others called Frost, which from the days of frozen water have shifted to those p. 8 of windless heat; yet their titles have refused to change through all these years, and the names remain the same though the characteristics have altered. And were it not that dust and stones are unable to assume the character of their neighbour, the squares of Ma'arrah would by now be devoted to learning, and the supplies of eloquence would be drawn from its inhabitants.

Now it is said the origin of perfume among the idolaters[1] was that the (5) blessed Adam fell in the places where it grows Yet the hard rock refused to be imbued with noble qualities, even as the fire, smothered in ashes, has good excuse for going out Your fellow-man would seem better suited to assimilate character, and his organs are better fitted for the pursuit of virtue Why then, when they were exhorted[2], did they not wake up? Why not, when they counterfeited, counterfeit what had been shown them[3]? True, the raven cannot think of hunting the gazelle, still less can it pick up a camel in its beak, or cover a dromedary with its wing A tent cannot be spread out of a strap, nor a sword-belt be cut (10) out of a shoe-latchet It would be clear injustice—not to speak of the impossibility—to compel the pole[4] on the ground to approach the pole in the sky, or to force the frog[5] of the hoof to leap like the frog of the marsh And if ever

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[1] Literally, the Buddhists The story is told by Mas'ūdi, *Murūj al-dhahab* 'Adam fell in Ceylon on mount Rāhūt And it is said (with whatever truth) that the reason why so many sorts of perfume grow in India is that when Adam was ejected from Paradise, he took with him a bag containing various sorts of spice, &c'

[2] Apparently, the people of Ma'arrah

[3] The reading does not seem quite certain The Beyrut editor reads *mariyya*, meaning a cow whose milk flows copiously

[4] The Arabic here means a kind of thorn

[5] The Arabic signifies 'vulture,' the pun has therefore been altered

the pot boil through the running of the horse with a white spot on one leg[1], or one well water five hundred cattle, that can be accident only, not by desert, and is an ideal beyond which further progress cannot be made. So too the racing ground may contain old jades as well as the horses that are fit for it, and vermin as well as its masters, the birds of prey, are to be found in the fields of air, at times the man of 'Udhrah[2] has won the first prize, and the dove gone a-hunting. And if people call one learned and another clever, the (15) similarity of the name does not preclude difference between them when they come to be tried, just as the battering-ram has a namesake among the sheep, and the fly has in Arabic the same designation as a sword-blade. The same word in Arabic signifies *glorious* and *thatch*, and part of the head is called a hemisphere Not every one who *thawwabs*[3] is a bearer of good tidings, nor has every one who yawns pearly teeth to show. You have shown us an ideal after which it were useless to strive, a goal which we should vainly endeavour to reach The fruit of the date-tree is assigned to him only who has looked after it in the grafting season[4], and he only should hunt the ostrich of the desert who has been sparing with the bottle of the liquor-dealer Let the lazy (20) take their rest, he who is in earnest must rise early.

'Umm Wuhaib asks me for a camel that shall move slowly and yet be first[5].'

'And leaving Laila next morning I was like one who in the morning gazes after a star that is moving to the West[6].'

Now pretended victory is not so honourable as real victory, nor is the chamomile the moon, and it is a falsehood if the barren woman professes to be prolific. Even though the gardens rustle on the heights and the valley be turbaned with corn-poppies, yet the rough places are not cushioned with tapestry, nor the watercourses with rugs[7].

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[1] The reference would seem to be to a line of Imru 'ul-Kais (ed Ahlwardt, 149, 150) in which the noise made by a horse is compared to the boiling of a pot The spot mentioned is said to be a bad sign (T A) Perhaps the winning of a prize of meat is meant

[2] Compare with this phrase Luz (Eg) p 413 وسوحد العذری عطما ناحرا, where the note implies that العذری 'a member of the Banu 'Udhrah' should be read, the Mu'aidī of the proverb (Maydānī I 269) 'Mu'aidī has won' was of that tribe

[3] This means (1) to say, 'Prayer is better than sleep,' (2) to be tossed about

[4] Reference to the 'award of Ibn 'Ajlān,' quoted in Luz (Eg) p 359 'Your world be for you, not me, I award it on the principle of Ibn 'Ajlān, "let him that grafted it reap its fruit"' Cf Agh. XIII 121, Kāmil (Eg) I 141, Muwatta (Zurkānī) III 102

[5] Maydānī I 116 The proverb in the ordinary form has *Umm Al-khiyār*

[6] Verse of Kais Ibn Mu'ādh, quoted in the Kāmil of Al-Mubarrad, ed Eg I 172 (ed Wright, p 166)

[7] Perhaps the author is thinking of a line of Abu Tammām, p 199, l. 3

Far off as our habitation is from yours, and many as are the hills and dales (25) that come between us, we are sure to receive from you some correction of our faults and guidance to the right way through the wise letters you send us and the p 9 sagacious counsel you bestow; just as Jupiter and Venus, though they be distant, still bring the objects of desire to those whose tutelar stars they are—in the opinion, of course, of the astrologers and certain of the ancient philosophers—(God forbid that we should say the same or plunge into the paths of paganism! However, when a phrase has become popular, people instinctively employ it). (5) And so, although you have pitched the tent of your sojourning in Egypt, making light of all business, however heavy; yet our villages are still by God's grace under your protection[1], and the fields of Ma'arrah among the territory which you guard and save. Just as, according to them, the tutelage of a single planet may extend to distant climes and different zones.

Every man of pure metal and ancient vein[2], every one with a trace of intelligence that he can call into play, and a touch of discrimination on which he can rely, ever since he heard the first droppings of your shower, and pictured to himself in thought the brightness of your blade, has been as dumb as a crab, and as (10) numb as Saturn Their silence is longer than a bridal veil, and their memory drier than a wether's breast Well would it be for them if they were like semi-articulate animals, or people with a twist in their tongues! For a foreign accent is better than dumbness; and it is better to stammer than to be tongue-tied. However to regret a lost chance is like trying to raise the dead, and a hillock cannot be turned into a garden any more than Saturday can be turned into Friday And it is useless to say one's prayers before prayer-time comes, and to (15) adopt the pilgrim costume[3] after the sacred month is passed. And albeit their hasty utterances have no value in themselves, and win no attention from literary folk, still the delight of the finder in a coin which he picks up is no less than that of the lady's maid in the central pearl of the necklace. The beauty of a fair girl does not persuade the mother of an ugly one to hate her on the contrary, she will caress her ugly daughter all her life, and mourn over her loss when she is gone It is a shame to slaughter a camel because it is not equal to the load of an elephant, to knock down a humble cottage because it is outtopped by a lofty (20) castle, to break the arrow because it is shorter than a spear, to bury the old camel because it cannot keep pace with the young On any such principle we ought to abandon all utterances except 'yea' or 'nay' to express our meaning, and

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[1] Allusion to his post at the Dīwān al-Sawād

[2] Literally, 'every man in whom that which bears the same name as the sword is ancient'

[3] See the description of this in Keane's *Six Months in the Hijāz*

employ such as these very scantily, out of respect for your words; and also both rhymed prose and verse should be forbidden · just as the tribes called Hums[1] in the time of paganism and the Keepers of the Ka'bah in old days would not take to themselves square houses out of respect for that temple. And indeed any one who tries those forms of composition except yourself is like one who wastes his prime in spinning horse-hair, or spends his youth in the search after *baram*[2] and (25) *markh*[3]. Now you cannot with fat[4] stop an enceinte woman's appetite, and freckles do not count as tattooing. And all except you spend out of a slender capital, whereas your tide never ebbs. It is a pond (not the sea) which is exhausted p. 10 by draughts, a candle (not the sun) which is spent in giving forth faint rays. And they in this region are like the teeth of combs or the molars of white asses five years old[5], the thought of profit will turn them in any direction like a blind arrow or a vagrant caravan.

> 'In a region wherein the enemy has alighted surrounding it like the circle of hair on a horse,'

where 'choking interferes with verse-reciting[6],' and caution with elegant (5) apologizing. Their feet are sore from treading on rocks, and robbers have gone off with their camels. Their life is ease followed by violence, and 'after the arms are stripped nothing but captivity remains[7].' They are on the look out for 'the snare of the fowler[8],' and expect daily the archer's arrows. The water-seeker is next neighbour to the drinker, and the last cub is not very different from the first. Tasm was nearly allied to Jadīs[9], and the nine-year-old camel is not far off the six-year-old. Yet and again they try to answer[10], but the answer shows no talent, any more than a galled place shows fur, or the lion is the hyena's friend, and their fear of ruin betrays their deficiencies, just as the yellow shows between the interstices of the teeth. A little knowledge shown by them is thought wonderful (10) and strange, and unfamiliar as an earring upon the nose, a waist-band round an eagle, a string of shells upon a camel's calf, or an antelope in a village. For those of them who are sound 'will be dead to-day or to-morrow[11],' and if his fears be

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[1] An account of these tribes is given by Azrakī.

[2] According to Dozy a name for long-leaved thyme, or for the yellow and fragrant flower of 'Abraham's tree.'

[3] *Asclepias ignivoma*.

[4] See the story in Aghānī X. 28.

[5] Maydānī II. 303 and I. 277, i. e. they are all alike.

[6] Maydānī I. 159.

[7] Maydānī II. 156.

[8] Hamāsah, p. 111.

[9] Names of mythical tribes, the founders of which were supposed to be brothers. Hamāsah, p. 79, the two are called the two tribes of Jadīs.

[10] The form used does not occur except in a proverb.

[11] Proverbial phrase for an old man, Maydānī II. 355.

not yet realized, 'it is as though they were [1].' Had they moved before they got embedded in the mud, and had they relied on God to help them to make way before they grew tired, then the refugee would have benefited by his flight [2], and the back would have had a respite to lay down its burden And how long can the camel behind which the hunter shelters himself endure the onset of the white-breasted beast, or the mouse the cat? Although the acquisition of the necessary (15) equipment be harder than 'the plucking of thistles [3],' yet is the packsaddle of a swift camel easier to ride than a horse with a ring of hair on its back [4], and a bed is of little use to a porcupine The singers among them produce their music, and the distinguished among them shine amongst men whose waking time is shorter than the twinkling of their eyes, and whose sleep is longer than their year, who think good ink the finest of their accomplishments, and fine paper the acme of eloquence Supposing if, when one of them produce some milk and water, another pronounce it mighty fine,—well, many a wretch bowed down before (20) Isaf [5], and dates have been offered to idols. The termite takes an upper chamber for its use, and often the sheep have been humiliated by the lamb [6], and a woman's veil has been put on the face of an ass Seaweed [7] is no luscious food. Moreover, reflection should come before hasty action, and wooing before marriage. In your presence however (God preserve your life until the midday hurries into the light of dawn as fast as the midday prayer flies from abbreviation [8]!) nothing will serve them but capitulation and to surrender at discretion and if you hear such (25) a statement as that the digger of a well came upon pure milk, or that honey has been drawn from camels, or that a spring of wine appeared in a desert place— p. 11 your eloquence knows best how to refute such a statement, and the force of your intellect to prove it false Sufficient for the sod is a tear-drop to quench the mourner's grief sufficient for the she-camel is a milking pail when its udders are full: sufficient for a well in flat ground if it serve instead of rain-clouds.

Your bestowing on me epithets equal to your favours is a service to which my gratitude is unequal, and which I shall rise from my grave reflecting on, it has planted joy in my inmost heart, and taught me to think much of myself, and filled

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[1] Part of a verse of Nābighah, see Mufassal, sect 577

[2] This appears to be the meaning The Beyrut editor takes another view

[3] Maydānī I 216

[4] Said to be a bad sign in a horse There is a play on the words in the original

[5] Name of a pre-Mohammedan idol, according to some set up in the Ka'bah, according to others on Safa

[6] Maydānī II 63 The proverb is فرارة تسفهت فرارة We should therefore alter the text accordingly

[7] Maydānī II 139

[8] i e. the reduction of the number of prostrations

my soul with lasting pride until I shall find myself in the grave-digger's care, (5) holding converse with death. My wit has begun to flow again after it had run dry, and the remains of my existence have been watered and revived after they had all but failed. The generosity which I have experienced at your hands—a quality whose Arabic name signifies cool winds—has filled my breast, and made me presume upon my station; just as the south wind stirs up the dust from the ground, and the north wind moves the quiet sand. At last I upbraided myself, and turning to my hidden soul said: 'The mark of a branding-iron on the face is more ornamental to a man than pride.' This Zephyr has been (10) blowing and roaring too long; let me not be like the sand, which, rising from the heels, gets into the nostrils. Am I intoxicated or asleep? If it be the first, then it is an intoxication that is encouraging; if the latter, then my sleep is showing me a fair dream.

Nevertheless, I know well that a dog's leash cannot be made out of *ghadham*[1], and that a ram does not deserve to be clad in silk, and that a skin is not to be filled with a he-chamois' milk. Bitter draughts increase the gall, and potations of aloes will not make a man rubicund. And who am I to be described as a high-stepper, and to be set in the scale against the heavy? Let the inexperienced person blacken his mouth with *barīr*[2]—what has a coy lass to do with rouge, or (15) a herd of cattle with perfume? Surely my learning is to yours like a drop to the ocean, or a bee to a palm-tree! Still a man with two dirhems is rich in the eyes of him who has only one, and a snubnosed man aquiline as compared with him who has no nose at all. But as for Shaddād son of 'Ād[3], and 'the slaughterer of the horses[4],' it would be strange if *they* thought the possession of great wealth lay with pedlars and collectors of dry sticks. I am as unable to thank you adequately for your generosity as is the ant to carry a cloak, or a moth to pierce a pearl. (20) Would that you (God bless you!) could but get a glance at my secret soul and the contents of my heart—since you would then learn that my heart and sides are filled to overflowing with respect for you, and foaming like bowls with your love. Not because you have represented my molehills as mountains[5], and mixed my dust with musk, nor because the noble prince your father[6] (whose reign God

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[1] Dozy gives for the word in the text the equivalent *salicornia fruticosa*.

[2] Name given to the fruit of the *arāk* when ripe.

[3] A mythical king of Yemen, who endeavoured to outdo the splendours of Paradise with his wealth.

[4] This probably means Hātim Al-Tā'ī; the occasion on which he slaughtered the horses is described Aghāni XVI. 100.

[5] Lit. 'Thabīr,' name of a mountain in the neighbourhood of Meccah.

[6] See p. 1, n. 2. His favours to Abu 'l-'Alā are otherwise unknown.

prolong!) conferred favours on me sufficient to attach me to him, and benefits that
(25) it would be tedious to recount; but, because you have been given the keys of style, and the sentences you utter are like 'the stars that hide behind Hadār[1],' and you occupy a place among the devotees of learning similar to that of Tubbaʿ[2] among the Arab giants, I have grown as much attached to you as are the populace
p. 12 to a munificent king, when he practises generosity and decides suits with justice. Hence I am as faithful to you as was the hoopoe to Solomon[3], and asseverate with an oath what I have asserted about your goodness. Those assertions are true to the letter, and my oath most solemn, and I repeat them till the ignorant account me foolish, and the vain talkers would prove me wrong For not satisfied with placing you above the moderns, I have exalted you above those that are in their graves as well, and have declared you superior not only to those that remain
(5) but also to those that have gone before I have gagged the loud snorter, and given the prize to the last-comer; for the victory is not to him that comes first in time, neither is the prize given to antiquity · the rhyming letter comes after the vowel called *taujīh*[4], and the horse Akhdar[5] was earlier than Al-Wajīh[6]. And even though the fact be unalterable, and there be no pleasure in recounting it, still it must be confessed that the grain comes before the wheat, and the grey before the dawn. No person has denied your brilliancy, nor rivalled what you have written: only people have a hankering after what is old, and any deviation from the beaten track throws a cloud of dust on people's minds[7], aye, tinges with
(10) blackness, like that of lava, their inmost hearts; even so did not the worshippers of Allat and Al-ʿUzza find fault with the texts revealed by the blessed Mohammed? God is my witness that I have not ceased dyeing the sky with red, and tanning the earth with fog[8], till both lusty youths and decayed old men, and those between who are approaching maturity or turning grey, have shown themselves to belong to one of two classes, either intelligent and safe from the clutches of the ignorant, or unintelligent and subservient to authority.

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[1] The فرود of the constellation حضار are mentioned in a verse quoted in the Lexx

ارى نار لليلى بالعقيق كانها * حضار اذا ما اعرضت وفرودها

L A V. 276

[2] See below, Letter XXX

[3] Koran, Sura XXVII

[4] Vowel preceding the rhyming letter, when no vowel follows it

[5] A horse or ass, the supposed progenitor of a breed called Akhdari

[6] Stallion of Ghāni Ibn Aʿsār (T A X 419) It is not clear how Abu 'l-ʿAlā knew their respective dates

[7] On the justice of this see Goldziher, *Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie*, I c ii

[8] Perhaps this means working day and night

You (God preserve your power!) are a branch sprung from a pure stem, which (15) has risen to the stars[1], you have guarded your pearls well[2] before producing your secret store and between[3] squeezing the dry udder, and letting the full one flow, between throwing stones to collect the dirt in muddy wells, and quaffing large vessels a breastplate was formed out of the links, and a cloud collected out of the fleeces.

I had intended asking you to present me with some of your sayings—things of beauty which are better than wealth, but I was dissuaded therefrom by my respect for you and my low opinion of myself, and out of reverence refrained and kept (20) still. God forbid that your benefits should be other than spontaneous!

You promised to send me occasional compositions in prose and verse, and our souls crave after the fulfilment of your promise as the thirsty lips crave after pure water or the verse after a rhyme, and importune us for them as the sick man importunes for health. But how can the dust produce a sweet savour, or the wilderness provide camping-places for travellers? I have ventured to enter your service as correspondent in order to inform you of this, not out of any desire to overwhelm you with my loquacity,—would indeed that as a writer I could be called your slave! However the prayer of the unlettered is sometimes heard, and (25) the request of the stranger granted Moreover, your critical powers will be too exalted to scrutinize me too closely, and your generosity will overlook any slips I may make. For the knife is not applied to the rock-lizard till after the animals p. 13 that pasture are finished, and the property of the people exhausted. I ask God's protection from any phrase which, like a dove's collar, is regarded as an ornament, but is in reality more like a widow's weeds All such I would decorate with hailstones and leave to shiver in cold. Rather than such I would have a tumour under the tongue or a palsy in the frame.

Attention bestowed on the person criminally inclined will save his fingers from (5) the hatchet of justice And I will finish what I have been saying by the prayer that if in the praises I have uttered I have knowingly blinded myself or been seeking any bribe for telling the truth, may I be struck by a sand-wind and an abiding punishment. The night of him who shivers with cold is happier than the night of the liar, and the day of the perjured is worse than the day of him who perishes with thirst. For me, when I praise you to lie or to imitate 'the smith[4],' (10) is as unnecessary as for a young child to wear a turban, or a lad to dye his hair

[1] Lit 'the Spica'
[2] A line in Sakt al-Zand I 37 may be compared.
[3] The original is exceedingly difficult, and I give this translation as a tentative one
[4] Maydāni I 36 The smith is supposed to declare he is going away in order to hurry on customers

black. Lengthy as is my discourse, I am still like one floundering in the dark or stretching out a maimed hand Were I to produce a bushel of indigo, it would not be comparable with one fine pearl, nor is a whole flock of *kata*[1], however big, equal to one kite, however lean and small It is foolish to play off a candle against the sun, or a lump of glass against mount 'Atālah[2]. And my learning looks up to yours as a scabby camel might look up to the tract of the sky which (15) the stars of the She-goat line What is the water as compared with the sky, or a torrent as compared with Canopus' rising-place? What are stray ostriches as compared with those that give their name to a mansion of the moon[3]? And shall I play off my few drops against your sea? 'No man ever comes to grief who knows his place[4]!'

p 14 LETTER II [After the last not later than 399 A H]

Copy of the letter called 'THE PALM-FLOWER,' *addressed to* ABU 'L-KĀSIM AL-MAGHRIBI, *when he sent the author the abridgement he had composed of* ISLĀḤ AL-MANṬIK[5]. *The letter contains an account of this compendium, which is complimented for its excellence and utility.*

Hail to thee, O Western[6] wisdom in Arabic words! What air bred thee? (5) What rain fed thee? Its lightning flashes must have been like saffron dye, its

[1] The Egyptian partridge, smaller than our partridge, something like a ptarmigan, with head shaped like a quail (Dozy) Described Aghāni VII 161

[2] Yākūt gives a number of suggestions for the locality of this mountain, most of the authorities place it in Bahrain

[3] Eight stars which rise on the 22nd of December Four in the milky way are called Al-wāridah, four out of it are called Al-sādirah meaning respectively the stars that have gone down to drink, and those that have drunk Kazwīni I 84

[4] Maydāni II 152

[5] Two works of importance bore this name one by Ibn Al-Sikkīt (ob 244), the verses quoted in which were commented on by Al-Sīrāfī (ob 385), to whose rather frequent allusion is made in these letters, the other by Abu Hanīfah Ahmad B Dāwūd Al-Dīnawarī. Although Abu 'l-'Alā's words (infra, p 23, l 21) imply that it was the former work which Al-Maghribi abridged, Hajji Khalifah (no 829) wrongly states that it was the latter Ibn Khallikan (II 411) states that Ibn Al-Sikkīt's work was abridged by Al-Maghribi, and (I 195) in an account of this performance which tallies with Abu 'l-'Alā's description, asserts on the authority of Al-Maghribi's father that it was finished before the author had attained his seventeenth year The present letter cannot therefore have been written before 387, and is probably not very much later than that date See p 1, n 2

[6] Allusion to the author's name Al-Maghribi Ibn Khallikan mentions that there was a controversy as to the origin of this name, and settles in favour of the supposition that the family originally came from the Maghrib

drops like palm-flowers! Thou hast alighted on a hill-top, where thou art safe from the dust, and I say unto thee what the brother of Numair[1] said to the lady of the Banu 'Umair—

> 'A lucky star rise for thee, and blame pass away from thee, and fair auspices bid thee good morning,'

for I regret thy presence more than the raven of Hijāz his fair attire when, having gone into the wilderness, and become a wayfarer, he approaches the hills of Rūm (10) in a season which brings down the snow-flakes from the air, and looking at his side finds it has turned grey, which grieves him so much that neglecting or forgetting to croak, he falls to earth, and walking as though in fetters, bethinks him of the verse of Duraid[2]—

> 'He passed his prime in pastimes till the grey rose to his head, and when it did so, he said to vanity Begone,'

and longing to return to that robe, and fearing the jibes of his enemies, he pines till he dies Now many an admirer by excess of eulogy renders himself tedious,—the Arabic *ibrām* may mean either the production of tedium or that of sloes, I refer to the former,—so I will merely pray that God may guard you till a *T* (15) coalesce with a *H*, which is equal to eternal protection, for these two letters are contraries and heterogeneous withal, being respectively surd and sonant, and from the top and bottom of the throat, and in respect of clearness and dullness of utterance as distinct as to-day from to-morrow. God make your rank, which is like that of the subject and the agent, also resemble the verb in that it never declines! For you have made me to be known about if I be present, and my existence not p 15 to be forgotten if I be absent, like the *yā* of the vocative and the omitted inchoative in such sentences as 'Zaid, come here,' and 'the camels, the camels!' after being like the *H* of the pause which it is necessary in certain cases to omit, and nowhere necessary to employ

Truly, though I find myself in a period of frivolity, like the *H* of the numerals which is attached to the masculine form and violates all analogy,—in my relations with a friend who regards me essentially as an *Alif al-wasl*, which he pronounces (5)

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[1] The 'brother' sometimes stands for the member of a tribe, e g Aghāni XVIII 44 a man is asked if he can recite any of the verses of the brother of Khuzā'ah, and asks in reply which brother? The poet ordinarily known as Al-Numairi was Mohammed Ibn Abdallah (Aghāni VI 24) Another was Abu Hayyah, who is frequently cited in Al-Mubarrad's Kāmil, and may be the author of the verse referred to Another was the poet known as Al-Rā'ī or the camel-herd (Aghāni XX. 168)

[2] Verse of Duraid Ibn Al-Simmah, Hamāsah, p 380

without emphasis, and omits when he can dispense with it, and circumstances like the *Hamzah*, which undergoes essential changes, becoming sometimes intermediate between a vowel and a consonant, sometimes a long vowel and sometimes a mute, a letter which has no consistent representation and no peculiar form; and among events which reduce the great to the small as though they were the mutilating diminutive which reduces *Mustahlis* to *Hulais* and *Kābūs* to *Kubais*,—still I prolong my commemoration of your favours as the Kufan reader prolongs his voice in *hā-ulā'i*[1], albeit I abbreviate my messages to you, the great Doctor, as (10) the reader of Medinah abbreviates such *Hamzahs*[2] as he can. If I address you an epistle, it is not because I wish to be answered If I am verbose in my thanks, it is not because I wish for a reward I am quite satisfied with such favours as I have already received, and the abundant benefits bestowed on me by your illustrious father. God maintain your power so long as the first form of the *Tawīl* metre remains sound, and the *Munsarih* remains light and free. and contract the hand of your enemies from the attainment of all success, even as the first hemistich (15) of the first metre on the table is *contracted*[3] May humiliation and arrest be united in his case as they are in the second species of *Madīd*[4]! May your enemy be pared like a nail and *damaged*[5] like the seven-syllabled word in *Basīt*! God bind mischief round the subjected head of him that hates you, even as the third form of *Wāfir* is *bound* when the last foot is omitted[6]! Nay, may the earth hide him as the third form of *Kāmil* is *hidden*[7], and may he be precluded from all hope! And may you and your father and all you both love and honour be sound, sound as the middle letter in the compound peg[8], which is safe from

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[1] The Kufan reader was 'Āsim

[2] The shortening of the Hamzah was supposed to be a peculiarity of the dialect of Kuraish, and hence the readers of Meccah and Medinah carried this process out wherever possible (Suyuti, *Itkān*, sect 33)

[3] The first metre on the table is the *Tawīl* The first form of this has the penultimate vowel of the first half shortened, an alteration of which the technical name is *Kabd* (Al-'Ikd Al-farīd III. 155)

[4] In the first half of the second form of *Madīd* the foot *fā'ilan* is substituted for *fā'ilātun* The terms used in the text are not apparently technical, and scarcely appropriate

[5] 'Damaging' means omitting the second and fourth letter By this process the foot *mustaf-'ilan* is reduced to *fa'ūlun* This change occurs in the last forms of *Basīt*

[6] To 'bind' means to substitute *sukūn* for a vowel in the fifth place, in the form of verse alluded to *mafā'īlan* for *mufā'ilatun*

[7] To 'hide' means to substitute *sukūn* for a vowel in the second place This form of contraction is not peculiar to the third form of *Kāmil*

[8] The compound 'peg,' if the author refer to this, is a word like *ayna*, of which the middle letter is *y* According to the Arabic metric the 'peg' is so named because it is not liable to alteration.

all disturbances! I have been as variable in responding to your gratifying favours as is the fourth of the metrical circles, which is the source of six metres that are (20) in use [1] and three that are not employed.

Now I promise to correspond with you as the Pleiads 'promised to meet the Moon [2],' and as Thurayyā, wife of Suhail, promised 'Umar [3], and I honour you at all times,—with the honour of affection, for indeed some honour proceeds from hatred You have erected a cupola to learning compared with which Syria is like a well, and 'Irāk a wallet-strap, its shadow does instead of the shade of the morning and evening, and is a substitute to mankind for the two Hinds, the Hind (India) whence the perfume comes, and the Hind of the love-lays: the owner of the veil (25) and the lords of Kimār [4]; the merchant brethren and the wandering lady [5].

No wearer [6] of a collar black as night, and spring garment with folded train, p. 16 who, perched on a palm-branch, tells the mourner what he wants, sounding in his ears an inarticulate melody, neither *Raml* nor *Mazmūm* [7], cooing, as it were, in verses, responded to by the palm-flower whose branch shakes to her melody, while he whom she misses does not return, mourning over some mate that is gone, for whom some disaster or other was decreed,—even such a dove, I say, is not more desirous of her mate than I am of getting some whiff of your news, nor longs more after her partner than I after a visit to your court. Not indeed that the ring-dove has any longings, or that her melody is accompanied by tears,—nay, (5) rather, having seen the two stars of the Ram called *Sharatān* before the three small ones called *Butain*, and the Northern Fish before the time of the evening prayer, she imitates the sound of rippling water, and produces a frequently repeated r–r–r. Some one, not knowing this, suggested that she must be mourning some dear

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[1] *Sarī', Mujtathth, Muktaḍab, Muḍāri', Khafīf, Munsariḥ* The system of the metrical circles is explained in Palmer's Arabic Grammar The account of these matters given in Al-'Ikd Al-farīd III 147 sqq is very simple and clear

[2] Maydāni II 327 'Proverbial expression for a true promise, as they meet once a month'

[3] Thurayyā, wife of Suhail, was one of the women to whom 'Umar Ibn Abi Rabī'ah composed amatory verses, the 'promise' referred to is probably that mentioned in Aghāni I 92, 'Thurayyā promised to visit 'Umar on a certain day, and came punctually' Thurayyā seems at one time to have been the wife of 'Umar For the play upon her name see also Al-Mubarrad's Kāmil (Eg) I 378

[4] Name of a place in India whence perfume was supposed to come, otherwise Kāmirūn (Yākūt)

[5] Apparently equivalent to الظعينة. The ladies of the erotic prologues are ordinarily represented as travelling

[6] This image of the ring-dove is worn threadbare, both in the Sakt al-Zand and in these letters

[7] Names of melodies of frequent occurrence in the Aghāni

friend, or have been bereaved of a first-born son. Nay, nay, O mourner—in the morning only dost thou mourn, but at eventide thou dost feign forgetfulness! No matter, no matter! I know nought stranger than the wailing dove: unhurt she complains, and is silent when her wing is broken! Longing is his whose memory (10) is at all times awake and is not dulled by the rolling years!

You, dear sir, whose existence God prolong, are the author of verses as beautiful as the moon, indestructible as gems: whose opening lines are like a crown raised far above the brow, and their conclusion like an anklet on the foot; compressing noble sentiments in scanty words, just as the venom of the viper is scanty but incurable. Your poetry is grand when rough, and not trivial when smooth. Now the softness of the mane indicates the high breeding of the steed, and the roughness of the coin the genuineness of the metal. All other verses after yours (15) are like the *a* of Salam, which is indeed expressed in pronunciation, but represented by no sign after the *l* in writing. Your verses come out of criticism as unscathed as gold from the fire, or silver from the hands of the smith; they are like a spray of pearls on beauty's neck, while all others might be a string of gourd-seeds on the neck of a cat. The force of your faithful intellect never leaves you in the lurch, nor has any one detected in your compositions a false rhyme or a false stop. What has the Lion's Nose[1] to do with a false step, or the Pointer with a thorn-bush? He that would rival your verses had best ride the staff of 'the man with eyes,'—even the 'Staff' of Kasīr[2] will not do! My conviction on this matter is as (20) immoveable as an indeclinable vowel, and I assert it without reservation; an oath is unnecessary, but is not lacking; and in the oath which I swear I neither perjure myself, nor shall repent. And just as the pearl is only hidden in its shell for the sake of fair ladies, so oaths are only lavished when an object of value is at stake. And how precious must be your mind, which can produce silver out of shingle, and date-branches out of gravel! Still, oftentimes resemblances disappear, and a man fails to resemble his father; nor is this strange, seeing that the green plant (25) gives birth to flame, and a headache is the product of the grape. Even so have you, dear sir, produced out of the magic of the ancients wisdom for the pious p 17 followers of Mohammed! How many a rhyme is yours guaranteeing your

[1] Name of a star.

[2] *Al-'Asa* was the name of the horse of *Kasīr*, the Lakhmite, a pre-Islamic hero, supposed to be the fastest horse of the time. Several proverbs are connected with the fortunes of this hero and his horse, which are collected by Maydānī, VII 9, in Freytag's *Proverbia Arabum*, I. 424–8. Basīr (the man with eyes) was the name of a famous letter-writer *Abu 'Alī*, of the third century, specimens of whose style are given in the '*Umdah* of Abu Ja'far Ahmad (Bodleian MS.). As we are told that he pondered long over an epistle before writing, the 'Staff of Basīr' will refer to the staff used during the process of deliberation.

sovereignty, and discomfiting the envious, till they become like those who are slain by old red wine, whose resurrection is at hand, with rebuke for their reckoning! Where are those who compare the camel to a castle, or the plain to a silken robe? 'Tis time to leave the house that has stood too long! A poet has arisen after them, compared with whom they are mere slaves! When any one in his quiet home hears your description of the broad desert or the worn-out camel, he wishes (5) that the camel-cloth were between his sides, and that he had liquid pitch for ointment, and dreams when he is asleep of the long necks of camels, and forges camels' nose rings from the anklets of white-skinned maids. abhorring the pearls that are for the neck and Hūris' eyes, and taken with affection for trickling milk and eyes like wells! He exchanges the moons that dwell in his harem for camels as sterile as the moons that rise over barren land (are of rain); camels that are bent as bows, and fleet as the ostrich of the desert Or, if you begin to describe a horse, how utterly defeated is he who compared the wild beasts to things that are fettered[1], and the hoof to a child's ankle[2]! Your description makes the half-bred envy the (10) thorough-bred, and the hawk the queen-bee, which has been given a privilege which many of the birds of prey have not, since, small as she is, she is the namesake of certain kinds of 'blazes[3]' And the time is past and the doctrine obsolete that the horse with a ring of hair on its back had the worst of auguries, and that the grey horse was to be avoided because one haunch was higher than the other[4].—at present the horses are safe from such caprices, and share each other's good fortune. the horse with two rings on his forehead is confident that his master will not come to grief, and the rider of the beast with a ring on his chest[5] is sure not to fall. (15) The driver of the spotty shall not be robbed, and the leader of the animal with white on his hind legs need not come down[6] And even if any blame attach to Al-La'āb[7], yet the draught-horses are free from it. Said Imru 'ul-Kais's mare Khaifānah[8] 'the pumpkin is for the housekeeper, and the tripod for the ample pot' —objecting to his comparing her mane to a bride's tresses, and her brow to the

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[1] Imru 'ul-Kais in a well-known line

[2] Imru 'ul-Kais (Ahlwardt, Dīwāns of the six most ancient Arabic poets) XIX. 26

[3] The white spot on a horse's forehead

[4] The good and bad signs in horses are collected in 'Abd Al-Mu'min's *Book of the Excellence of the Horse* (MS Hunt 469) A horse with one eye grey was said to be ill-omened (p 147)

[5] This mark was at first thought unlucky, afterwards lucky yet some said that such a horse could never win a race (l c p 141)

[6] Also a bad sign (l c p 139)

[7] Name of a famous horse, mentioned in a verse of the Dīwān of Hudhail.

[8] Reference to Imru 'ul-Kais XIX 37, 38, where the mare is said to look like a pumpkin from the front, and like a tripod from behind

well-modelled shield[1]. And whence had Imru 'ul-Ḳais rhymes such as yours, which are like the camel-train of the son of Sa'd[2],

'When its two sides were squeezed in a narrow place, Asjadiyyah and Latīm met together?'

The rippling of water may be heard in your erotic verses, and youth is lodged (20) in your proœms. Without being anagrammatic, so well do your rhymes solace the heart, that they combine the brightness of polished steel with the noise of the drinking of thirsty antelopes Your hemistich is like the stranger's looking-glass[3], counterfeiting both beauty and its reverse, so as to show the fair one how fair she is, and the ugly one what gives her pain And wine, when you describe it, becomes a cure for old age, and disowns the vine to claim descent from the generous vein; and the casks, dissatisfied with their pitch, and the cobwebs on their shoulders, put on embroidered raiment, and change their tar into gold- (25) leaf And I have heard you describe a tent in such wise that the musk envies the ground on which it is set up, and the stars in Aquarius called Sa'd of the tabernacles wish they were Sa'd of the tents

p. 18 I have also come across the *Abridgement of the Reformed Discourse*, the titles of the chapters of which almost serve as a substitute for the rest of the book and I marvelled at your being able to tie camels with lambs' cords, and to pour the ocean into the hollow of the chest, and to make the Euphrates flow through a needle's eye. Noble composition which sets all doubts at rest, and makes Al-Asma'i[4] unnecessary! Which expresses by a hint sentences of vast content, (5) just as a pronoun expresses a lengthy name! I say in narration 'I commanded Abu 'Abd Al-Jabbār,' but if I, substituting a pronoun, say 'I commanded him,' I am understood. A book whose constitution has been freed from weakness and disease by the omission of the poetic examples, which have been reduced to the condition of witnesses who have been testifying to what is false before a judge who knows their faith to be infringed, and who, being acquainted by personal knowledge with the truth of what they impugn, is in need of no demonstration Now having examined the proof-passages quoted in the book which you have abridged,

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[1] In verses 32 and 33 of the same poem Abu 'l-'Alā wrote a book in which dialogues were assigned to animals

[2] From a passage quoted in the Nawādir of Abu Zaid (Beyrut, 1894, p 16), from a poet of the days of paganism, Ghāmān B Ka'b B 'Amr B Sa'd. Asjadiyyah and Latīm are the names of two camels

[3] Kāmil (Eg) I 5 'A woman among strangers would keep her mirror bright'

[4] Famous grammarian of the days of Hārūn Al-Rashīd, who died 214 Constant reference is made to his philological writings

I found them to be of ten sorts, the same number as the brethren of Joseph who conspired together to do wrong, *plus* one sort, like 'that brother of Joseph (10) who was not there[1].' Now ancient poetry, although it be worthy of admiration, and an archive of memorable deeds, nevertheless is false in its statements, and given to drawing the 'long bow.' The first of the Mu'allakahs, beautiful as it is, and venerable as is its antiquity, nevertheless confesses to acts sufficient to invalidate the testimony of a man of acknowledged authority, not to speak of a woman of doubtful character[2]. A curse upon her for a hag, who had she been a human being, would have been among the most misled of the race! Now the author of the *Reformed Discourse* (God have mercy on him!) went far afield in his search for proof-passages—he even quoted the 'Rhyme of the Lizard[3],' which (15) annoyed the Arabs very much for when the language is so rich, must it help itself with loans, and obtain assistance from vermin? What, when even Ru'bah[4] is of no account with them, should they imitate the language of a lizard with bleeding claws[5]? Whoever examines our author's work will find it carelessly arranged, except the portion dealing with the *nomen actionis* and the verb, which is arranged in twenty letters, six pronounced with the tip of the tongue[6], three with the roof of the mouth[7], four tight letters[8], one servile, two dental spirants (*TH* and *DH*), one rising letter[9], and the two 'sisters' *'Ain* and *Ha* and *Shīn* included in the province of *R* God have mercy on him! Were he alive, he would die (20) of chagrin or burst with jealousy! He outstripped all others did Ibn Al-Sikkīt,

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[1] See various readings

[2] This name is clearly applied to the Mu'allakah itself The immorality of the first Mu'allakah was criticized at an early period even by Jarīr (Agh VII 60), who might be supposed indifferent to such matters

[3] One Rejez of the Lizard is quoted in Kāmil I 356, another in L A IV 280, on the authority of Abu Haytham, some one said to the Lizard وردًا وردًا, and it replied

اصبح قلبى صردا ❖ لا يشتهى ان يردا
الا عرادا عردا ❖ وصليانا بردا
وعنكثا ملتبدا

[4] Writer of Rejez, ob 145 Rejez was not accounted a sufficiently literary performance to deserve to be cited as an authority The reference to Ma'add (the Arabs) is from the tradition quoted by Ibn Khallikan I 234, a man asked the grammarian Yūnus the etymology of the name Ru'bah, which he said the poet himself did not know Yūnus replied, 'Perhaps you think that Ma'add the son of 'Adnān speaks more correctly than he and his father'

[5] According to the naturalist Damīri, the lizard wears away its claw by digging its hole in rock.

[6] *M R B N F L*

[7] The grammar enumerates four, *S T D Z*

[8] The grammar enumerates eight, *W J D T T B K K*

[9] The grammar enumerates seven, the same as those in note 7, together with *KH GH K*

and now is become the last horse in the race! After being at the top of the tree, he is turned into a tent-peg! His book was like rough gold, lying in a mine, amid rubbish dry and moist; then you come to extract and refine it, to polish it and elaborate it with your ingenuity! And now the stars may envy its brightness and the brilliancy of its polish. And it is no worthless friend, albeit it appear (25) with a new face—a friend who never tells tales nor bears malice, a friend who never speaks and yet is never silent! It has acquired the same place in the ancient language of the Arabs that the astrologer's glass holds in the science of p 19 astrology—a thin but compact object that contains sun, moon, and stars[1].

Let me add besides in respect of his repeated treatment of the same word, that to mention the same vocable twice in a literary work is like uniting two sisters in marriage at once. Marriage with one may be lawful and desirable, with the second it is unlawful and horrible. How can one litter contain two 'fair ones,' or the week two Thursdays? Mother of the lasses, enough of the name Hind[2]. (5) father of the lads, enough of the Sa'ds! Name thy daughters, thou, Zainab and Da'd, and name thy sons, O man, with any name but Sa'd! The precious are few, but the names are many The author of the *Reformed Discourse* was like a coquette, who sets plenty of ornaments on her neck, but leaves her waist and ankles without ornament.

The day the copy of your work arrived was a frosty day, which penned up beasts and men, and 'annexed' the genus to the heterogeneous. It brought no bonds on the antelopes, neither did it throw the wild herds in danger's way However, opposites can be united and obey the same law, and be handled at once with (10) pleasure and without injury Your servant Moses, meeting me without previous appointment, said, 'Here is a book which will be a credit to you, and a proof of your close connexion with our master whom God preserve' And I read aloud to him the two texts 'There thou shalt neither be hungry nor be naked[3],' 'There thou shalt not thirst nor suffer heat.' And methinks you must have seen the light of supremacy, and called out to those that are behind you what Moses, the blessed, called out to his people, 'Verily I have seen a flame, perhaps I may bring you a spark therefrom, or find guidance at the fire[4].' And would I knew whether the spark you went to seek is a spark of flame or a spark of gold, what- (15) ever it be, the brilliancy of your character wins admiration, and its purity brings

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[1] Compare Luz (Eg) p 390, 'The astrologer's glass, small though it be, shows him all the inhabited world and desert'

[2] The names *Sa'd* and *Hind* were the most hackneyed forms of appellation. There was a proverb, 'Wherever I turn, I meet a Sa'd,' 'every belle is a Hind.' (Zahr al-Ādāb II 111)

[3] Koran XX 116

[4] Koran XX 9

blessings on your head. 'Laila's wood-gatherers spent the night seeking for her a torch that should be neither faint nor smouldering[1].'

You returned from your first journey, bringing with you a torch of fire, which, if touched, was the fire of Abraham, and, if accosted, the fire of Moses; and having plucked aromatic herbs such as the Marzubans presented to Kisra, such as were accounted a prisoner's ransom, such as having witnessed Noah's times, yet (20) remain fresh to this day.

Moses, indeed, only sought pasture in the most fertile meadows, and made ever for the skies whose clouds are most faithful; but your servant Zuhairi came from your blessed presence like a flower from a garden, or a rose of spring, leafy and sweet-smelling, nor is he while enjoying your protection to be compared to an antelope under the shadow of night, or a lion under a cloud that sweeps: for the darkness gives way to dawn, and the clouds to sunshine, rather is he to be compared with a fish in the wave, or a gazelle in a covered well.

I have on a former occasion informed you that learning is like rain coming (25) after rain · it waters the highlands, how much more the lowlands? I, however, have been stranded on a place[2] where the impressions of any such shower are as completely obliterated as those of the paint on the hands, a place where fighting has prevented the growth of the herb 'Unhappy children of Sadūs[3]! The p 20 enemy is fierce and the pasture far away! Lucky children of 'Abd Al-Madān, with sheep in the *hurbuth* and sheep in the *sa'dān*[4]!' Seeing this, I weaned the soles of my feet and found nothing but colocynth! Nay, there was nothing but its fruit[5] in my sack. I had plucked it off a tree torn up from the earth, without roots[6]. The milk of a camel that eats wormwood becomes bitter, whereas if it eat *arāk*[7] it becomes sweet and luscious. This is my case in the matter of (5) learning. and as for my worldly goods, I still have by God's grace and your favour a couple of mouthfuls, one of patience and another of wealth, which keep

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[1] Verse of Kuthayyir, cited by Zamakhshari, Kashshāf, ed Lees, p 1052 The author of Shawāhid Al-Kashshāf however assigns it to Ibn Mukbil after Kāmil (Eg) I 331

[2] Ma'arrah, compare the description below, Letter XX

[3] The tribe 'Abd Al-Madān is mentioned in Agh IX 17, Sadūs is well known The source of the quotation in the text is not clear Compare however the proverb 'Empty as the pot of the Banū Sadūs' in Maydāni II 121, and for the glory of 'Abd Al-Madān, Kāmil I 56, 72

[4] 'Wild anise' and *Neurada procumbens* (Dozy and Redhouse) Both were regarded as excellent pasture, there is a proverb 'Pasture, but not like *sa'dan*' In L A II. 342 the two are coupled as rendering the cattle fat and their milk copious See also Al-Mubarrad's Kāmil ad init

[5] Mentioned as the food of slaves in Aghāni XVIII 161, 'We are slaves whose rations are *habīd*'

[6] The meaning seems to be that he had to get all his learning from books

[7] *Capparis sodata*

me between them as between a watchful night such as is my year, and a milch-camel which forms my property and my food. Now a little may be made the means of acquiring a great deal, even as he that prays seeks for light by protracting his ablutions, and atonement for his sins by wallowing in the mire, and he who visits God's house washes away his sins by the long privations he undergoes.

(10) In writing to you, dear sir, and refraining from doing so to your noble father (whose reign God protract!), I am like Saba son of Ya'rub when he tried to conciliate the Creator of light and Governor of the world[1] looking about and finding nothing more generous than the sun, he bowed down and worshipped that. Nor is your father to be blamed for contemning the spring anemones, and the hypocritical compliments addressed to him, out of dislike for the people of the town that is named, like the anemones, after Nu'mān, only one would have no (15) excuse for hating on their account the line of the founder The people of that town in relation to his sublime majesty are of two classes, importunate beggars and infelicitous orators. And I hid myself from them as the hungry stomach is hidden by a garment, or as one who, having committed a fault, lies low. But I was forced out by your generosity, which is like the dawn, the appearance of which is a signal for each animal to set about its business, for the jerboa to come out of its hole, and the king out of his lordly mansion And the ape would fain chatter in the desert before the tawny lion.

(20) Having been told that my former letter was exhibited in your sublime residence, this encouraged me to let its sister go, hoping to enjoy similar fortune: for surely falling in the sea, she must be wetted Right proud is she to think whom she is to visit, but 'had[2] the first been shut out, the second would never (25) have started.'

p. 21

LETTER III.

To one of the Sultan's[3] ministers to intercede for a friend, who had been governor of a province, named AL-HUSAIN[4] *son of* 'ANBASAH *son of* 'ABDALLAH

This letter is addressed to a minister whom God keep long at the head of affairs, treading on the necks of the ages, a letter written in circumstances such as engender gratitude, and favours that should not be disavowed, albeit

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[1] Letter XXX [2] Maydānı II 144, Aghānı XXI 199

[3] Probably the Sultan is 'Azīz al-daulah It is clear that Letter IV concerns the same business as this, and therefore that the request which this letter contains was granted

[4] Not otherwise known, it would seem.

I confess that I fall short of the gratitude which is your due, and if I reveal some (5) of your favours, I conceal others. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, and His favour on His chosen saints! I swear the most solemn oath that no dove with inseparable collar, and garments never stripped off, the gift of spring, which, when the early rain has been bounteous to her, strikes up, and, refusing to be comforted, deplores her case—which, mounting some lofty tree-tuft, neither in heaven nor upon earth, repeats her refrain in both major and minor keys[1]—no such dove, I say, longs more for her mate than I do to see you, or grieves more over him than I grieve over the occasions when I have missed the opportunity of serving (10) you. If, however, I have neglected to write, thereby violating my inclinations as 'the lizard violates its offspring[2]' or the robber his hand[3], this is to be attributed to anxieties and distractions, to the desire of sparing you, and unwillingness to trouble you; for in truth I long for you as the aged beast longs for the familiar spot, or one interlacing branch for another, and sigh all the time after an interview with you as the she-camels sigh after the calves or the thirsty ones after the water-trough. Your guests have not to pass the night in the wilderness, nor your neighbours to toss stones down miry wells. I snuff after the fragrant news of you (15) as men snuff after the scent of flowers, and look eagerly for them every night and morning. I feel about them as the thirsty one feels about the drops of morning rain. The early comer and the late returner alike gladden me if they bring them. God make them always to have smiling faces, rejoicing both friends and comrades! Your friendship makes me as conspicuous as 'a black swan[4],' and the finger is pointed at me as one who knows you, just as it is pointed at the lightning by him who looks for it. Did I attempt to conceal the fact, my heart would betray me as the phial betrays the wine[5], or the palm-tree betrays itself in the open plain. p 22 And how can he be hidden who goes before the camel[6], or he who goes through the mansions[7]? Now one look from a lover[8] is sufficient, and the first taste of water after a day of thirst suffices. Now I know well that if a man stay in your court the antelopes will not come in his way, nor will any of his secrets be revealed. He has not to drink the water of Naṭāt[9], nor does there befall him that

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[1] The terms in the original are technical.

[2] Maydānī II 40. The lizard is supposed to devour its progeny (Damīrī, s v), whence the proverb.

[3] Which is cut off when he is caught.

[4] Maydānī I 366. The Arabic is 'a pregnant stallion.'

[5] Maydānī II. 311. The proverb is 'More treacherous than a glass.'

[6] Maydānī II 264. The proverb owes its origin to the verse of Kulākh cited infra, p. 81. Compare also Maydānī I 325.

[7] i e the moon. Maydānī II 354.

[8] Maydānī II 297 with an alternative form.

[9] Naṭāt was the name of a well at Khaibar supposed to produce fever, Yākūt and T A.

which doubles the ring on the forehead[1]. But—so secure is he—he sleeps as (5) soundly as the slave-girl when the clouds of night are passing[2], and his thoughts cast away care as a runaway slave casts away his fagot, or a disappointed fisherman his net. Those on the other hand who are other men's guests are 'like the chestnut, which, if it come first, has its throat cut, if last, is hamstrung[3].'

Now my friend Abu —— has not ceased to be enchanted with your gifts, and indeed through your care for him he is safe after his wounds and rescued after his illness. Otherwise he would have been reckoned the first comer's spoil, and a stone for him that drives away camels to pick up. He would have been given filth to drink, and would have been left abandoned 'like Mina on the night when the pilgrims leave it[4].' But God has mercifully saved him through you from (10) emptiness of pocket, and a deserted courtyard, and has given you a permanent reward as well as temporary gratitude. You have kept him from being 'chopped up like a leek,' from being peeled off like resin from an acacia, from being thrown out like the tooth of a ten-year old, from turning colour like water at the bottom of a new waterskin. These are 'handles that have been tied' and cords that have been fastened, since your attentions were 'close at hand for him[5],' and out of other men's reach, and you were his companion in solitude[6], and where the (15) gazelles lick their young into shape[7]. You 'drink in safe places[8],' and light your fires on a high hill[9].

> 'His friends are a circle who fear not in the combat, and eloquent orators.'
>
> ''Tis[10] the same to him what time you come to him, whether at the time he fears misfortune or in the day of prosperity.'

Every third day there comes a letter from him enclosing heavy loads of gratitude, constantly recurring to the theme. And herein he has started no strange byway, nor followed any disused track, he has followed a course which to his family is (20) smooth as the back of a serpent, or the matting of the skilful maker:

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both quote a verse in which a man in a fever is compared to one who had drunk the water of Naṭāt.

[1] A single ring on a horse's forehead was thought to be lucky, but a double one unlucky (Ibn Kutaibah quoted in 'Abd Al-Mu'min's *Book of the Excellence of the Horse*.)

[2] The sense is not clear.

[3] Maydānī II 110. The colour was supposed to be unlucky.

[4] Maydānī I 101.

[5] Maydānī II 342. Literally, at the top of the *Thumām*. This grass (*Panicum dichotomum*) is supposed to be so low that the top of it is within any one's reach.

[6] Maydānī II 153.

[7] Maydānī I 101, i.e. in the desert.

[8] Maydānī I 307, i.e. are a good guide.

[9] From Al-Ḥuṭay'ah.

[10] Zuhair III 30.

'Can[1] the spear-wood be produced save by its own tree? can palms be planted save in their own ground?'

Small blame to him who is fond of fame, for that is the fairest mistress one can visit, the most enduring treasure one can store up! He who praises you gives you full payment for your gift, and acknowledgement is sufficient recompense for a benefit. Now the family of Abu —— have offered prayers in every chapel for you, and have been hoping for you as men hope for the spring rain—

'For[2] their unfledged fowls, like chicks of the *kaṭā*, when her delay seems (25) long to those who are unable to rise with their red crops'

Now he and I are two branches of one tree, two stalks of one *arāk* plant, two birds of one nest, two habitués of one *wadi*, the same cloud keeps the heat off both of us, and one flame gives us both light, indeed I may, improving on this p. 23 simile, say that we are two fingers of one hand, two feathers of one wing, two twigs of one branch If the wind bend him, I bend, and if it deal gently with him, I feel it gentle, and my tongue interprets his mind as the flute speaks for the mouth of him who blows it, or the string for the fingers of him that plays upon it

Now I have fallen short of what is due to your lordship, even as the stature (5) of a girl falls short of the length of a spear, or as the contents of a mountain puddle fail to saturate a galloping herd Nor do I now know what turn I had better take. 'Let him whose mouth is empty greet thee[3]!' I can speak to no one, nor ask any one that answers. It is enough for the tongue to praise its benefactor, and for the heart to love its generous friend

Still I shall not cease to ask for further favours, although these be sufficient, or to draw out fresh pearls of liberality, although they abound. Now to perfect a kindness is like letting a horse follow its bridle or a camel its rein, and even so (10) were it to help Abu —— with word after word and counsel after counsel, till he be restored to his children, who are pining by reason of his absence, and asking constantly concerning his fate, just as the sufferer from drought asks about fodder, or the lonely about company, and who await his emerging as the young in a *katā*-flock await the arrival of their mothers with water[4]. But your good (15)

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[1] Verse of Zuhair, Ahlwardt, p 91, cf Aghānī IX 153 and Al-'Iḳd Al-farīd III 3

[2] Verse of Al-Hutay'ah in Dīwān Mukhtārāt Al-Shu'arā, p 137

[3] Maydānī I 160 A man who was eating made this excuse for not saluting

[4] The naturalists (e g. Damīrī) state that the katā goes to very long distances to fetch water for its young

health is the greater matter, and the favour which is beyond all others. and if you have any request, honour me by mentioning it, and slake my thirst by letting me serve you.

p 24

LETTER IV

To a friend who asked him to place him lower in the rank of his correspondents[1].

This letter (God preserve the prince to whom it is addressed, who excels all others without exception, and is clad in the garments of praise!) is written from a place haunted by his fair memory, and inhabited by persons who are indebted to his favours, and proceeds from a heart that swims in affection for him like a bubble in a pond or a raindrop in a mountain tarn Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, and His favour be upon His chosen servants! My longing for a sight of (5) your blessed person is like wine which gets better with age, or like a story-teller who acquires authority with seniority. It is a longing such as no cooing dove could adequately express, nor she-camel descended from Jadīl[2]

Your letter when it arrived was like a bird of good tidings alighting, or refreshing water suddenly found at the bottom of a *wadi* Now loquacity in describing that of which the reality is familiar is a habit that should be avoided, just as explanation of the obvious had far better be eschewed When I broke the seal, that letter sent forth an odour like musk or incense. And grateful did I feel to Almighty God when I read that you are covered over with salubrity as with (10) a mantle, and that comfort is your house and home, since I regard you as my shield of defence and my permanent protection, and when any whiff of your virtues catches my nostrils, or any tuft of the branches of your heroism my fingers, my face brightens, and my inner man is healed. Even so does 'the handmaid boast of her mistress's carriage[3],' and the nursemaid of the fortune of the household to which she belongs

I am aware that your delay in answering was only in order 'to bring the mischief home to its author[4],' and the punishment for the error to him who committed it. For I wrote after the 'leather was rotten[5],' and the garment (15) decayed Now the tears that flow slowest are those that contain most comfort for

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[1] There are similar letters in Al-Khwārizmi's collection.

[2] A camel stallion supposed to have belonged to Al-Nu'mān Ibn Al-Mundhir, often named together with Shadkam

[3] Maydāni II 108 A proverb used of those who boast of what is not theirs

[4] Maydāni II 174.

[5] The proverbial phrase for 'the mischief had become irremediable' is 'like one who tans after the leather is rotten,' Maydāni II 117 'The fat was in the fire' would be our equivalent

the afflicted; and the cow-camels that have been ten months with young are the hardest for men to drive

I am aware that your counsel is cream without whey, and that you can discover the right course without a guide My letter about Abu —— was in the first place one of thanks, and only in the second contained a reminder and a request for help· inasmuch as it is not your custom to put off your suppliants to a lengthy term, or to offer barren promises to those that hope in you.

> 'Let go your hands and be at ease, the firesticks can only be made of *markh*-wood[1]' (20)

And as for the efforts you have made to set right such errors as have been committed—when 'the bow is given to him that can handle it[2],' and the steeds (p 25) to them that can ride them, and the lance to him who can wield it, the foot of falsehood slips as the truth remains firm, and at the rising of the sun of veracity the darkness of deception disappears. And Abu —— has been leaning against mount Mutāli'[3], and has attached himself to the stirrup of a horse that goes not lame. It is no blunt sword that he has shaken, no stumbling steed that he has sped to the goal. Yet had it not been for your care, he would have leant with his hands upon crumbling stones, and followed the lightning with his eyes, and met death 'upon the pale horse[4]' And even if you did not trouble your fingers to (5) write, and your pen to answer, the effects of your benefits would have spoken, and the marks of your beneficence would have been eloquent narrators 'The countenance shows what the lip has taken in[5].' Its brightness is a sufficient guide, and its openness gives full information And your gratifying us by the restoration of Abu —— is a favour which has followed on others, and also has brought others in its train For his presence is as grateful to the better sort as *sa'dān*[6] to a camel, or the shore to an oyster For they are all dependent on his bounty, and are plants which he has planted.

As for the section of your letter which deals with the style of address, assuredly I must mount a step or two for one who has descended so many for me, and must (10) needs traverse a high road for the sake of one who has gone through the jungle on my account. This is merely an act of civility, 'the service of one who can render but little[7].' I have therefore only acted like one who stands on tiptoe to

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[1] According to Maydāni I 254 a proverb, meaning that when you are applying to a generous person, importunity is unnecessary

[2] Maydāni II 57

[3] Mountain in Nejd

[4] Maydāni I 141 The literal meaning is 'on a pale camel,' it is not impossible that this proverb may be distantly connected with the familiar passage in the Apocalypse

[5] Maydāni I 242

[6] P 25, n 4

[7] Aghāni XVII 13

meet a cloud in his desire for the sweet water which has come down the whole way between heaven and earth. I had indeed wished to ask you to return to your proper style[1], and to treat me according to mine, but was afraid I might lay myself open to a suspicion of which I am innocent, and of the contrary of which (15) I might be more reasonably suspected. My delaying to do this was therefore a slip, and an act of negligence, for our friend had commissioned me to move a mountain, to climb up to the shining moon. And what is the extra load to the two burdens, or a finger to the two hands? Surely I am not to be blamed if I responded with a few drops—a last squeeze—to your copious shower. You commenced by giving me titles that I did not deserve, and I answered in such wise as my duty enjoined, I could not be like the barren sand which is rained upon but produces nothing, nor like the grave which takes but never gives. I could not (20) do less than the mirror of the stranger, or the great cistern in a rich man's house, into which the handsome beau looks, and it endeavours to show him his like And your stroke has the same advantage over my response that the fair face has over its image in the polished glass. And when your language recovers its youth and becomes mild and modest, I too will change my note and come down a peg, and once more adopt a humble style. Now Abu —— is the Pointer of my night, the rose of my spring, and the garden of my hopes, and since you and he are two moons in one halo, two suns in one ring, two good words in one message, (25) I have contented myself with writing to one of you, and offer you both most fragrant compliments and copious salutations, to last so long as the mountains remain firm, and the *salam*-tree[2] has leaves

p 26

LETTER V

Portion of a letter written to a person who, it was supposed, had been devoured by a lion after his muleteer had played him false the name of the latter being MOSES[3]

I have been in a great state of trepidation ever since we were told that it was not known where or whither you had gone Some said you had been benighted and attacked by a lion, to which I replied, 'stuff and nonsense,' 'fiction and

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[1] The opening words of Letter III were probably objected to by the correspondent We learn from the Aghānī that the Caliphs and other rulers resented hyberbolic compliments paid to subordinate officials The correspondent's objections were therefore in all probability prompted by a sense of danger

[2] A sort of acacia

[3] A common name, it would seem, of messengers, &c The subject of this letter seems to recur in Letter XXII, the person meant being probably 'Abū Mansūr Muhammad son of Sakhtakin'

fabrication[1]!' A lie invented by some enemy! Nevertheless I was alarmed (5) thereat, for the fonder people are, the more anxious they feel But when Husain's caravan arrived from Apamea, and they told me that they had seen you, I said· 'the sun shines first on Thabīr[2],' and 'none can tell you so well as he who knows[3].' And when your letter arrived assuring us that you had never entered Apamea, I wondered at both Musa and Husain, hoping for the best, and 'scaring the birds that were on the left[4].' As for Musa, he has only followed the ordinary custom of muleteers and camel-drivers, a custom as natural to them as it is to adulterate milk[5], or to put stripes on a garment. But Ḥusain is an honest man, and must have made a mistake, or been heedless and computed without making (10) due inquiries.

'And men bring thee tidings thou didst not engage[6],'

and with whom thou madest no appointment But since God has brought you safely home, what matters a thistle in a distant spot, a torrent in Yemamah, a shingle in Tihamah?

LETTER VI.

p. 27

To a man who had lent another 166 *dirhems with which he desired the latter to buy him bedding*

I am writing on the first day of the month—God give you good luck on both its bright and its dark nights! And my longing to see you is like that of the poet of Asad[7] after his meagre drops, or that of the poet of the Banu Numair after his camels[8] God gather us in the abode of vanity with piety and joy, and in the (5)

[1] Maydānī I 218, where the first words are spelt دُهْ درين. The account given by Maydānī is that a Persian trader in pearls endeavoured to deceive his customers by the resemblance of the Persian words *du* (two) and *duh* (ten), whence his words became a proverbial expression for a fraud.

[2] Maydānī I 310 According to the story told in explanation of the proverb, the pilgrims did not leave mount Arafat till the sun shone on mount Thabīr *Here* the sense must be similar to that of the next proverb quoted

[3] Koran XXXV 15 [4] From a verse of Abu Dhu'aib, زجرت له طير الشمال

[5] There are several proverbs in which 'watered milk' figures, but none of them seem quite appropriate here

[6] Maydānī II 375 Taken from the Mu'allakah of Tarafah.

[7] The reference is to the verses of Abu 'l-Kamkam Al-Asadi quoted in Hamāsah, p. 604, commencing 'Salute Al-Washal for me, and tell it that all water since I have left it is distasteful' The commentators there doubt whether *Al-Washal* stands for 'meagre drops,' or is the name of a particular fountain

[8] The poet referred to is 'Ubaid Ibn Husain, ordinarily called Al-Rā'ī, 'the camel-herd,'

best habitation may He 'take the rancour out of our breasts[1].' And the proverb says, 'Half a loaf is better than no bread[2].' So I have done what I could to get back from —— dirhems to the amount of one century, and the number of years in which Ibn Mukbil contended with Mub'id[3], and the number of the Pleiads, and one half—in other words, 166½ dirhems; and I have asked him to purchase with these certain garments woven by a skilled workman and his son. For (10) I thought to myself that you were on the seashore quite close to the ocean, and that these garments would find you under the constellation of the Scorpion or the Goat, and avert the mischief of the winter months, Shībạn[4] and his brother, and the icy days and nights. But he gave me the desires of the camel that waits for the rest to drink and the promises of 'Urkūb[5].

p. 28

LETTER VII.

Written to his maternal uncle ABU 'L-KĀSIM[6] ALI *son of* SABĪKAH *when he came up from Baghdad and found his mother dead, not having heard of her death before his arrival.* [400 A. H.]

God preserve you so long as cloud rises or mountain presses! This letter is written from Ma'arrah of Nu'mān, whither I have returned after fatigue like Ka'b (5) son of Ma'mah[7] 'We are God's, and to Him do we return!' Praise be to God, praise mixed with tears, and to which the ears are deafened through pain! And I pray God be gracious to our lord Mohammed and his family, though grief make thick the utterance of this prayer, albeit at the resurrection it will count the more therefor! And now I will tell you about myself

owing to the frequency with which camels are described in his poems For an account of him see Aghānī XX 168

[1] Koran VII. 41.

[2] Literally, 'if you cannot have success, do not have failure,' Maydānī I 19

[3] Ibn Mukbil was a poet of the time of the Prophet, whose proper name was Tamīm Ibn Ubayy Accounts of him which, however, throw no light on this allusion, are given in Ibn Ḥajar's Biographical Dictionary, and the Khizānat al-adab

[4] A name for the 'white' or snowy months, December and January

[5] Maydānī II 271 A familiar phrase for promises that are not realized

[6] Sabīkah is the family name, not the name of the immediate progenitor of the person addressed Letters XVII and XVIII are addressed to the same, and also the poem in Saḳt al-Zand I 165 From this poem Abu 'l-Kāsim would appear to have been a great traveller, the poem is intended to dissuade him from a visit to Egypt, and from leaving the regions watered by the Euphrates

[7] A pre-Mohammedan hero, who is said to have handed over his share of the water (which was measured out with a pebble) to some one else in the wilderness

'O would that I and he were dead! But "would that" is no help against fate[1].'

'Would that 'Amr (albeit "would that" is a vain delusion) had never raided Fahm, nor descended on their valley[2]!' (10)

'Were the beginnings of things but as clear to a man as are the endings, he would never be found repenting[3].'

God's mercy on thee who now dwellest in the grave, whose life is become as though it were yesterday!

'Though hope be cut off from thee, yet regret shall remain for thee so long as time lasts[4]'

I can hope for no good after her death, nor can I do anything but plunge deeper and further into misery.

'God be gracious to thee[5], how we miss thee! And how little does the wilderness befit thee! How canst thou, who wast wont to be so timid, make for thy dwelling a place which the champion fears to pass?' (15)

'God grant no blessing on our world, now that it is no longer thine!'

'O final consolation, thy date is the resurrection[6]!' Truly a far-off term! There is no consolation 'till the 'Anazite of the acacia-fruit return[7],' till Al-Nu'mān return to Hīrah[8], till a prophet be raised out of Meccah Were it not that the death days are fixed in writing, gladly should I have been killed for her sake in cold blood! Howbeit I did tell her that I was bent on travelling, and that I was fully intent thereon, and she gave me leave Maybe she thought it an idle fancy, the lightning of a cloud without water! However 'the term of each is fixed in writing[9],' and my grief over her loss is like the pleasures of Paradise, which are p. 29

[1] Verse assigned to Nābighah infra Cf Maydānī II 328.

[2] Verse of the poetess Janūb in the Dīwān of Hudhail (Kosegarten, p 243) It is here quoted incorrectly, the second half of the first hemistich being وما ليت بنافعه, and the second hemistich having تهبط for تحلل. The author has confused it with a line in the second part of the Dīwān of Hudhail (Wellhausen, *Skizzen*, p. 58), يا لهف نفسي ولهف صلة جزعاً

[3] Verse quoted in Al-'Ikd Al-farīd

[4] Hamāsah, p 408, by an uncertain author

[5] Hamāsah, p 409 Verses of Muwailik son of Mazmūm

[6] Hamāsah, p 544, part of a verse by Abu Sakhr the Hudhalite

[7] Maydānī I 176 The proverb is 'till the two gatherers of the acacia-fruit return,' or 'till the 'Anazi who collected the acacia-fruit return,' Maydānī I 63 His name was Yadhkur son of 'Anazah See also Harīrī, p. 292, ed. 1. In Aghānī XVII 152 some other proverbs of this sort are collected

[8] In the verse of Abu Dhu'aib cited by Harīrī l c, 'till Kulaib be raised from the dead' is appended The reference here is to a verse of Nābighah, infra, p 116

[9] Koran XIII 38.

renewed so oft as they are consumed, and to dilate thereon would weary the hearer and be waste of time. God make her and me your ransom from every ill, (5) and give you consolation instead of me! 'Many who have heard my story have not heard my excuse[1],' and indeed 'apologies are lies[2].' However 'the scout tells no lies to his people[3].' And if you say 'the milk in the skin contradicts the excuse[4],' and 'when you hear that the smith is going away next night, you may be sure of meeting him in the morning[5],' and 'even a veracious person will tell lies at time of absence[6],'—by him who produces the palm from the date-stone, and the fire from the flint, I have not turned away from Ḥaleb either in going or returning, except as a pearl-shell might be avoided owing to the dangers of the sea which lie between. And, as you know, though born a man, I am like a wild (10) animal in character.

> 'When the wolf howls and whines, it sounds familiar, but if a man makes a noise, I feel scared[7].'
>
> 'He thinks the wilderness the best society, and finds his way whithersoever the galaxy finds hers[8].'
>
> 'He would give his nose if only the earth's surface were as clear of men as tanned leather is of hair[9].'

Had I entered Haleb, I should have been obliged to perform certain duties which it would have fatigued me to perform, whereas had I neglected them, (15) I should have been blamed and given offence. And if a man have not travelled to Na'mān of *arāk*[10], he cannot be blamed for not bringing presents of tooth-picks, from the traveller to Hajar[11] dates are expected, and salt-fish from the traveller to Bahrain[12]. None the less my desire to see you is like an old man's desire for youth, or a she-camel's for her young. Were it put on the backs of camels, it would not allow them to gallop, or were it turned into the collars of

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[1] Maydāni I 245

[2] Maydāni II 260

[3] Maydāni II 196. His interests being bound up with theirs.

[4] Maydāni I 37. The proverb refers to an excuse being contradicted by some obvious fact, the man in the legend having declared that he had nothing to offer his guests.

[5] Maydāni I 36. See above, p 15, n 4.

[6] Maydāni II 17 (with عند for في)

[7] Verse quoted by Damīri, *Nat Hist* I 327, without giving the name of the author.

[8] Hamāsah, p 43, verse of Ta'abbata Sharran.

[9] Author uncertain.

[10] Name of a wadi between Meccah and Al-Ta'if, inhabited by the Hudhail. It is also the name of many other places, but the Na'mān famed for the *arāk* is the one specified.

[11] Maydāni II 119, the words of the proverb are 'like one who imports dates to Hajar.' Neither Maydāni nor Yākūt tells us to which of the towns named Hajar the proverb refers.

[12] 'Round Bahrain the fishery is abundantly copious, and furnishes occupation to at least half the inhabitants of the island.' (Palgrave, *Central and Eastern Arabia*.)

ring-doves, their throats would be too tight to coo. For, indeed, the brown dove is not more capable than a band of eloquent relatives, rich apparel is better than (20) ruddy feathers, a house is better than a nest, and a golden collar than a black one. Nor can a she-camel compare with a man of sagacity and intelligence, the camel-calf's mother is not an intelligent being, since all she can do is to cry and afterwards be consoled, to be grieved and afterwards appeased, whereas my grief over lost opportunities of being near you is like that of an antelope that has nursed a fawn in plain and desert, taking herself a house that is like a lion's lair, under the shadow of some solitary lotus, then some afternoon she falls asleep and the fawn strays and becomes the lot and portion of the wolf. And when she wakes (25) from her sleep, she looks and sees only some remains of skin, and is frantic and distraught And may Almighty God grant that we meet and be gathered together like the stars of the '*Arsh*[1], which fear not separation nor diminution of their number.

I wrote to you from Rakkah explaining my purpose in staying there If that p 30 letter have arrived, it is well, but if it have been delayed, it would be inconvenient to reiterate its contents. 'Every occasion has its proper formula[2],' every season its fruit, every valley its acacia. I found Baghdad 'like a pie's wing[3],'—fair, but carrying nothing

'Truly 'Irāk[4] is no home for my people, and its door is shut against (5)
Abu Ghassān
So pile the carriage upon some powerful camel, sprung from Mahrah, at whose birth the people of 'Īd presided[5].'

'How many[6] an up-and-down hill-path lies between me and Mayyah, how many a wilderness wherein the camels are left dead!
It whined for far-off Nakhlah, but I said, "fie for shame! Trouble is there; so make for Syria. For 'Irāk has no people that we love, its people are of proud looks"'

'And if the measure of Yemamah be scanty, that of Mayyāfārikīn is not (10) more so[7].'

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[1] Four stars [2] Maydānī II 168, taken from a verse of Al-Hutay'ah

[3] Maydānī I 323 has a proverb 'unluckier than a pie,' to which there is perhaps a reference The ill-luck was due to the habit of tearing the backs of quadrupeds practised by this bird

[4] Verses of Dhu 'l-Rummah

[5] Yākūt I 110 says this tribe was called 'Īd or 'Īdī son of Nad'ah son of Mahrah son of 'Īdan, after which the camels are named

[6] Yākūt IV 769 ascribes these lines to Jarīr, reading Maryah for Mayyah. In Aghānī XXI 193 they are quoted from Mutalammis with Asmā for Mayyah See the whole poem in *Christian Arabic Poets*, I 333

[7] Yākūt IV 703 cites this verse, but cannot specify the name of the poet. Al Bekrī 569 cites

I say to my soul, 'You[1] disgusted me when you had pearly teeth, how much more when you have none?' 'You[2] have defied me from youth to dotage.' 'This[3] is not your nest, be off.' 'This[4] place 'twere best to leave.' 'You[5] spoiled the milk in the summer.' 'You neglected the mushroom in the spring.' 'You have spilt the waterskin on the sand' 'Return[6] to your proper kneeling-place.' 'Mischief[7] bring you to your people! What have you to do with men?' The summit of the mountain is no fit home for the ostrich, neither is the plain the feeding ground for the young chamois!

(15) 'Every[8] tribe of Ma'add has its nook or quarter whither it can flee'

Now I had thought that the days would vouchsafe to me to abide there. but the wild beast sticks tight to his bone, the maidservant is chary of her blow[9], the slave greedy of his trotter, the raven stinting of his date,—and I found learning at a greater discount at Baghdad than gravel at the 'Akabah heaps[10], cheaper than dates at Medinah, more common than palm-branches in Yemamah, more copious than water in the ocean. However, there is some obstacle in the way of every (20) blessing, and some storm-cloud or roller in the way of every pearl

'If[11] you cannot succeed in a thing, then leave it, and pass over to what you can do'

'Be[12] satisfied with what brings you to your destination,' if there is not shade enough for your whole body, there is sure to be enough for one of your members And when the camel kicks her milker, and the horse stops still under his rider, and the bow baulks the archer, and the cloak is not wide enough for the chilly

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it from Tha'lab (ob 291) from 'Amr from his father, and adds that 'measure' here means 'price'

[1] Maydānī II 5 The proverb recurs in these letters It is supposed to have been said to a woman who, finding that she had been supplanted in her husband's affection by a toothless infant, thought that by becoming toothless herself she would regain it

[2] Maydānī II 6 [3] Maydānī II 151 [4] Maydānī II 342

[5] Maydānī II 54. The proverb refers to people who miss an opportunity that they have thrown away

[6] Maydānī II 20

[7] Tabrīzī on Hamāsah, p 252, Freytag, *Proverbia Arabum*, III. 1144 His translation is slightly different

[8] Verse of Al-Akhnas, Hamāsah, p 346

[9] Maydānī I 354 (see Appendix), for the 'trotter' compare Freytag, *Proverbia Arabum*, III 2041, 'Give a slave a trotter, and he will want a fore-arm,' for the rest, Maydānī II 48, 212

[10] See Keane, *Six Months in the Hijāz*, where it is stated that after each pilgrimage these heaps are removed

[11] Verse of 'Amr Ibn Ma'di Karib, Al-'Ikd Al-farīd II 70, Aghānī XIV. 25

[12] Freytag, *Proverbia Arabum*, III 444 Cf Maydānī I. 310

wearer, and the swarm cover the face of the honey-gatherer, when the cloud deceives the forage hunter, and the lightning makes a fool of the sky-gazer, and 'the supposed pasture leaves the poor shepherd in the lurch'—'the dog returns to (25) his vomit again[1],' and Reynard bethinks him of his hole, and the raven becomes contented with his nest.

All through my journey I neither entered valley nor climbed mountain, nor was carried by ship, nor bestrode beast save by God's grace in the first place, and in (p 31) the second your kindness, favour, and consideration. your benefits are too many for my thanks, too copious for my memory to take in, and I am aware that you deal with me in this way without thought of either recompense or gratitude. Since, however, silence is in such cases accounted rudeness by the majority, whereas gratitude is vexatious to the doer of the kindness, I find it easier to bear the blame of one than the blame of many (5)

Abu Ṭāhir had given me a load of benefits to carry so great that I can scarcely sustain a portion of it: you have not therefore inherited your kindness to me from a distant relation, nor taken your affection for me from a strange house You are 'a[2] chip of the old block.' You are but reproducing your father's conduct, and 'the[3] undergrowth springs from the thorn,' and the *baram*[4] from the *salam*[5]; and 'no[6] man can be blamed for resembling his father.' Your letters constantly knock at your friends' doors, reminding them to be generous, and keeping them to non-obligatory duties, till you have made them as closely attached to me as the mane of a horse, or the coils of a rope. And whenever they offer to perform (10) any service, I endeavour to avoid troubling them, believing as I do in the wisdom of Zuhair's saying—

> 'Whoso[7] is ever soliciting others, and does not refrain, shall one day be humiliated and vexed'

Had I known that I should have to come back I should not have gone upon this journey, however 'misfortune[8] attends the tongue' and fortune is fickle, and events are like waves of the sea, some of them revealing foul vegetation, others (15) fair rows of pearls Man knows not to what his mind is attached, nor to what thicket his luck will bring him Had I known the future, I should have got

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[1] Maydāni I 196 and II 4 The Arabic is 'Lamis returns to her bad ways'

[2] Maydāni I 308 The Arabic means 'a nature I know from Akhzam,' originally, it is said, applied to the unfilial conduct of the children of Akhzam, who had in his youth displayed similar behaviour to his father

[3] Maydāni II 58 The Arabic is فى عصة ما ينبتن شكيرها.

[4] Supra, p 11, n 2 [5] Supra, p. 32, n 2 [6] Maydāni II 264.

[7] In his Mu'allakah [8] Freytag, *Proverbia Arabum*, III 44

myself great good fortune, and no harm should have touched me; there was found written on a tablet—

> 'O thou whose heart is full of care, fear not, if fever be ordained for thee, thou shalt take it'

The favour of God is upon all those whom you know in Baghdad, they treated (20) me with singular courtesy, and spoke well of me in my absence, and honoured me above my equals and my peers. And when they learned that I was getting ready to leave them, and, indeed, on the point of going, they manifested great sorrow and said many kind words, they put on fresh garments of grief, and the eyes of old men shed tears. 'There is no god but God!' What plant is there on which nothing feeds? Every fragrant herb has some one to smell it; every dunce[1] has p 32 her task, every beast, however slow, its driver; every slave-girl, however ugly, her owner;—and so anxious were they for me to remain their neighbour, that they gave me commands which a contented mind forbad me to execute, and which went beyond all that is customary But Nadād[2] is at a distance from the snow-mountains, and he who makes for the hollow takes a different direction from him who makes for the hills

> 'Very[3] different was the day I spent upon her saddle from the day I spent with Hayyān brother of Jābir'
>
> (5) 'What[4], when I am far on in years and the crown of my head is white, am I bidden to do what was too much for me when I was beardless?'
>
> 'Māwiyyah[5], little use is wealth to a man when his throat rattles, and the breath leaves his chest'

God reward them! If what they did was done out of kindness, it was a great benefit; and if they did it for pretence, still it was an act of good fellowship, and so I left Baghdad, with my honour still in a vessel that did not leak, not one drop of it had I spilt in quest of either wealth or learning Indeed, since I passed my (10) twentieth year, it never occurred to me to seek knowledge from any inhabitant of either 'Irāk or Syria 'He[6] whom God leads finds his way rightly, and for him whom God causes to stray thou shalt not find a guiding friend' It was the Library that attracted me thither

> 'Even[7] if I do love one who dwells in Al-Ghada, I am not the first aspirant after a thing who did not get it'

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[1] Maydāni II 181, with 'artist' for 'dunce'
[2] Name of a mountain in the Hijāz
[3] Verse of Al-A'sha, discussed in Khizānat al-adab III. 56
[4] Verse of Hātim Al-Tā'i, see Aghāni XVI 107
[5] Verse of Hātim Al-Ṭā'i, see the Cairo edition, p 118
[6] Koran XVIII. 16
[7] Hamāsah, p 574 Verse of an unknown author Al-Ghada is a valley in Nejd (Yākūt)

All honour to Baghdad and its inhabitants! And to the Tigris as a river and as a drinking-place!

'Truly[1] in my passion for 'Azzah after the ties between us have been loosed, (15)
I am like one who seeks the shadow of a cloud, which fades away so soon as he thinks he can put himself to sleep beneath it.'

Every one whom I informed of my intended departure displayed sorrow and looked sad. So that I concealed my intention from them as a woman conceals her personal defects from her rival. And when the chameleon of parting climbed his *tandub*[2] and the *surad*[3] of separation perched on its place, I and they were like Abu Kābūs and the Banu Rawāhah[4].

'He spoke them fair and thanked them, and bade them a last adieu.' (20)

So I started from Baghdad the sixth day before the end of Ramadān, with camels pulling sideways, and straps creaking, and ships expecting to sink; a journey wherein the traveller on foot wished he were mounted, if only on a palm-trunk, and that he were shod, if only with the skin of his face and brow, and that he were lying down, though it were on thorns and brambles; 'in the morning[5] the people will be thankful for their night-journey,' 'troubles will then be cleared away[6].'

I passed by Haleb (since I went on the road that leads by Mausil and Mayyāfārikīn), where are waters like those of Tathrah[7] and 'Udhaib[8], and praise be to (25) the God of ages!

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[1] Verses of Kuthayyir, out of a poem of which large portions are quoted in Khizānat al-adab II 376–381.

[2] The chameleon is said when climbing this tree (of which the authorities only know that arrows are made of its wood) not to remove more than one foot at a time.

[3] Name of a bird, said to be somewhat larger than a sparrow, and the sparrow's enemy. The grammarians mention that it is a bird of ill-omen, but not apparently that it signified departure.

[4] Ibn Al-Mundhir, when attacked by 'Kisra' the king of Persia, fled for refuge to the tribe of Tay', who refused it, and then was offered it by the Banu Rawāhah, but was unwilling to endanger them. The story is often told, e. g. Aghānī XX 132. The verse is by Zuhair, Dīwān Mukhtārāt Al-Shu'arā, p. 57, Ahlwardt, p. 102.

[5] Maydānī II 2, i. e. they must wait till it is over to praise it.

[6] Maydānī II 44.

[7] 'A valley or river in the territory of the Asadites' (Yākūt). 'A well in the territory of the Banu 'Ukail' (Al-Bekri).

[8] Famous spring 'between Kādisiyyah and Mughithah, four miles from the first, thirty-two from the second' (Yākūt). For the waters of Aleppo, see Cowper, *Through Turkish Arabia* (1894), p. 74, 'The river of Aleppo, the Kuweik Su, which is identified with the Chalus of Xenophon, is a somewhat sluggish stream wandering through orchards of ash, maple, poplar, and other trees.' According to this writer the water is not particularly good.

p. 33 'I went down to the salt waters and loathed them; so God water my first folk and my spring!'

Each time the ravens croaked, I said, Fair words, sweet bird, thou knowest nothing of what was or is to be, back, back! Try to frighten some one else, not me! Long time hast thou alighted upon carcases, and have children broken thy wings!

(5) 'Who[1] will tell 'Amr son of La'i, wherever among mankind he may be:— Let not the binding of spells keep thee from the pursuit of good. At one time I would never go out if I met a raven or a sparrow, but now I find the birds that fly to the right and to the left are the one as the other. And even so neither good nor evil is abiding with any one.'

(10) And when we alighted at Hasaniyyah[2] the bearers of sand and of money were alike, and the day-traveller had little trouble where he should sleep, and the night-traveller where he should start and where pass the night. And we went on thus till we reached Āmid, when the troubles of the road returned, and the travellers were again involved in dangers.

'You[3] brought us home half-dead yourself, without marrow in the bones and without a hump.'

Being unable then to remain in the spot I had chosen, I decided upon isolation such as should make me like an antelope in its lair, and should completely cut me (15) off from mankind, except, indeed, those with whom God should join me as the arm is joined to the hand, or night to morrow. And I beg to offer you and your father (God help me by preserving you both!) salutations as beautiful as the *Ala*[4], as clear as water, as sweet as honey, as continuous as raindrops, as enduring as (20) the stars, as fragrant as the *'Arār*[5], as brilliant as the lightning.

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LETTER VIII.

Written to the people of MA'ARRAH, *when he was coming from Baghdad, before his arrival.* [400 A. H.]

In the name of God the merciful and clement! This letter is addressed to the people of Ma'arrah (whom God encompass with happiness!) by *Ahmad son of 'Abdallah son of Sulaymān*, and is meant for his acquaintance and kindred.

[1] Verses of Al-Kuzaz Ibn Laudhan, quoted L. A. XVII 350, and in part XV 408. They are also a commonplace in anthologies, where the worthlessness of omens is discussed (Agh. IX 164, Zahr al-Ādāb II 79). See also *Christian Arabic Poets*, I 286.

[2] 'Town to the east of Mausil, two days' journey from Jazirat Ibn 'Umar' (Yākūt).

[3] Author unknown.

[4] An evergreen tree.

[5] Said to be the Juniper.

God give peace to all these and abandon them not, and gather them and grieve them not!

This is my address to them at the time of my returning from 'Irāḳ, the gathering place of the wranglers, and the home of the remainder of antiquity: after having (5) ended my youth and bidden farewell to my spring-time; after 'milking[1] all the udders of time,' and proving its good and evil. I have found the best course for me to pursue in the days of my life is to go into retreat, such as shall make me stand towards mankind in the relation that the chamois[2] in the plain stands to the ostriches that are there. Nor have I been a bad counsellor to myself, nor have I failed to secure my fair share of benefits. So I decided upon this course after asking God's help, and revealing my idea to a few friends on whose characters reliance could be placed, all of whom thought it wise, and considered it could be carried out with prudence. And it is a matter 'over[3] which night-journeys have (10) been undertaken,' which has been 'settled[4] at Bakkah,' and 'carried[5] on the ostrich's back.' It is no offspring of an hour, no nursling of a month or a year; it is the child of past years and the product of reflection. I have hastened to inform you of this for fear that one of you out of courtesy might be fain to go to the house it is my custom to inhabit in order to meet me, and if he found this impossible, I might find myself afflicted with two bad things—bad manners and estrangement. And indeed 'many people incur blame through no fault of their own[6],' and the proverb says 'leave[7] a man to his choice.' And my soul did not (15) consent to my returning till I had promised it three things—seclusion as complete as that of Al-Fanīk[8] in the constellation of the Bull, separation from the world like that of the egg-shell from the chick[9], and to remain in the city even though the inhabitants fled through fear of the Greeks[10]. And this, even though those who are attached to me, or profess attachment, flee like grey antelopes or white

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[1] Maydānī I 162. A proverbial phrase used for trying both good and evil fortune.

[2] Maydānī I 24 and 115. 'A chamois is rarely to be seen in a plain, while ostriches are common.'

[3] Maydānī I 29, said to mean a matter which has received due deliberation.

[4] Maydānī I 74. 'Bakkah is a place in Syria, the words were said by Kasīr son of Sa'd the Lakhmite to Jadhimah Al-Abrash, when he fell into the hands of Al-Zabba.' The meaning is an affair that has been irrevocably settled.

[5] The proverb is 'riding the two wings of an ostrich' (Maydānī I 252), used of any one who is serious about a concern.

[6] Maydānī I 248.

[7] Maydānī I 219 (with دعّ for حل).

[8] Name of a star.

[9] Maydānī I 80.

[10] The chronicles of Aleppo at this period are full of the Greek invasions, which were made in part with the active support or connivance of some of the Mohammedan candidates for sovereignty.

camels. And I swear that I did not travel to increase my means, nor to gain by interviewing my fellows.

(20) What I wanted was to stay in a place of learning and I found out the most precious of spots, only fate did not allow me to stay there, and only a fool will p. 35 quarrel with destiny. So I abandoned all thought of the privilege which fate thought too dear to grant.

God grant that you may be able to abide in your homes and not have to be always on your horses and stirrups, and God shed upon you his favour as the full moonlight[1] is shed upon the hare-brained gazelle. And may he give good recompense to the people of Baghdad, for they praised me more than I deserved, (5) and testified to my merits before they knew them, and quite seriously offered me their goods. Albeit they found me not fond of praise, neither eager for other people's charity. And when I went away, it was against their will, 'and God is enough for me, and on Him let whoso will, rely'

LETTER IX

To one of the family of 'Ali.

The affection of my friend the Sharif is no new thing, but an heirloom. For (10) 'the fondness[2] of the dry-nurse' is only sham. I am told that you generously enquired after me, and found only the remains of a dwelling And indeed I informed you when in 'Irāk of my intended retirement, which would prevent my seeing you as you desired Arriving here, I found my mother had been carried off by destiny, and should gladly have died myself so I wrapped myself up in despair and isolation, having come exhausted myself to a state of affairs I by no means liked, such as a general dearth continuing from year to year with other mischief (15) which only God can remove. For this reason I have only sent a little money, the smallness of which grieves me exceedingly However, a journey is like an old camel in a level place, it plays with every plant 'Part[3] of a man's clothes resemble him;' and the dry well will not quench your thirst, the exhausted camel will

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[1] Reference to a proverb 'more easily deceived than a gazelle on a moonlit night,' which is explained by the supposition that the animal is blinded by the moonlight, and so is easily caught

[2] There are several proverbs more or less resembling the words here used, see Maydāni I 215, II 257 The word rendered dry-nurse in these proverbs is explained as meaning 'the camel that refuses its milk.'

[3] Freytag, l c, III. 244, quoted in Maydāni's gloss on the proverb 'a bad speech and a bad answer,' I 278

only give you part of your night draught of milk Take thy sparrow, hawk, and be thankful: 'take [1] from Jidh' what he gives you.' And I beg you to accept my excuses, and to favour me by accepting what I have sent.

LETTER X

p 36

To ABU TĀHIR AL-MUSHARRIF *son of* SABĪKAH, *written from Baghdad, and containing an account of the commentary of* SĪRĀFĪ *and the trouble taken by him over it.* [400 A. H]

In the name of God, &c. Praise be to God so long as acts intentional and unintentional are enumerated, and his favour be upon Mohammed so long as tribes assemble, and knot rise above knot in the spear-wood. My longing after you, dear sir, is like that of thirsty lands for the downpour of the cloud, and the benefit which I derive from your neighbourhood is similar to that which accrues to the fertile (5) land from fresh streams And I strain my senses after tidings of you as the herdsman who has suffered from continuous years of drought strains his after some thundercloud from the south for which he anxiously waits And my regrets over your absence are as those of the wild cow, which having gone in pursuit of pasture some evening is betrayed by some lion who comes and seizes its calf which has strayed and lost its way The cow wanders all round the sand-hill, and shows no 'comely patience [2].' And I think of the times when I was with you as the weaned child thinks of its mother's breast, and as he [3] who swore by the milk thought of the children of Khālidah. And I wait for your arrival as the Meccan tradesman waits for the foreign pilgrims, or the owner of cattle for the first appearance of vegetation. (10) And I fly to you for help as the drowning man turns to the nearest shore, or the timid man to a sword that is not blunt. And I am as reluctant to trouble you as is the dove to be inconstant, or as was Abu Jahl to appear at Badr. And my confidence in your generosity is as great as a mariner's in his float, or that of Al-Hārith in Nu'āmah [4] his horse And my gratitude for your benefits is like a horse dedicated to pious objects which cannot be held in It is renewed with every breath

On this day the —— of —— your letter reached me, and I rejoiced thereat

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[1] Maydāni I 191. 'Jidh' Ibn 'Amr Al-Ghassānī, when Sabtah, the collector for the king of Salih, came to demand the tax, produced a sword, and giving the collector a death-blow, said, Take from Jidh' what he gives you'

[2] Koran XII 18

[3] The reference is to a line quoted in the Kāmil (Eg) I. 295, Wr. p 284, 'May God, by the milk, not keep far the children of Khālidah'

[4] Name of the horse of Al-Hārith Ibn 'Ubad, of which the story is told in Ḥamāsah, p 252

(15) as a thirsty man rejoices when he reaches fresh water, or a wakeful one when he finds some one to talk to And the news of your good health which it contained delighted the mind with the pleasure of him who cries (small blame to him!) 'Good news! a son is born!' God grant us a meeting after which there shall be no more parting!

I understand what you tell me about the copy to be procured, and you herein have shown yourself kind and generous, whereas I am vexatious and importunate. You have been as liberal as usual, and I as troublesome as before. As for the (20) commentary, if fate favour, you shall have it, but if not, it is poor stuff I remember having written in one of my letters to you, 'though the texts differ, and the sections overlap, no matter, a patchwork garment will do as well as one of p 37 silk.' I must, however, except the text of 'Alī Ibn 'Īsā, for he was a man who relied on what was in his breast, and did not trouble himself about the rules of writing And I had hoped that by your good fortune people might agree, and as the Koran says, 'sell it for a small price, a fixed number of dirhems, and think (5) little of it[1].' I will not add 'since perhaps it may help us or we may take it for a child'

What you tell me about the corrupt state of the people is, as surely as leather rots, an ingrained disease. One panther breeds another, and the thorn is the sister of the bramble. But you, God help you, are well protected from all blame Is the book you want 'the hidden volume, which none save the pure shall touch[2]?' Let not disappointment lead you to be importunate. Surely it is all frivolous trash, medicine for the time of health 'And this life is but a delusive ware[3]' And (10) as for Abu 'Amr my master, his name corresponds with a verse which constitutes a most excellent omen—'it is like a tree whose roots are firm, and whose branches are on high[4]' I and my companions offer you and all your friends greetings such as make the paper that bears them fragrant, and whose rain makes a garden of the desert.

p 38

LETTER XI

To ABU 'AMR *of Astrabād about the commentary of* SĪRĀFĪ. [400 A H]

May salutation as fragrant as Indian saffron, or a garden in Nejd, be brought by a rain-cloud to the eminent shaykh Abu 'Amr, whom God preserve so long as an Elif quiesces, or an oath requires an 'apodosis,' and couple him with good

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[1] XII 20, 21 [2] Ibid LXVI 77, 78 [3] Ibid III 182

[4] Ibid XIV 29. The person in question would seem to be the same as the individual to whom the following letter is addressed, perhaps his name was *Tayyib*

fortune for his neighbour, as the Pointers are coupled, that fear no parting so long as dawn is followed by day! My longing for you would weary a mountain were (5) it laid thereon, and terrify a valley did it traverse it God grant that we may meet in some place of rest, secure from all ill-will! Your letter reached me, and made me as exultant as a caged bird that is released, or a fettered prisoner who is unloosed And the news of your good health gave me the joys of the two Dārīs, the one[1] in his devotion, and the other[2] in his perfume God preserve them both for you till Canopus become the moon, and until the juice of the thorn-bush turn into fruit I have expressed my gratitude and recognition, and have started importuning my friends, and assailing them from every point, but I have found (10) their resolution impeded by distractions which are to the student at Baghdad like the *'ura*[3] trees whose leaf never falls, or stale water of which one is likely to choke; especially if one gather the flowers of learning from every hill and sandy plain—sooner than trouble him with this I would throw the book into a pond till the cheek of Shuraih[4] blossom,—he, according to tradition, being smooth-faced, and never having had any hair God, the giver of all good gifts, grant that the *sh* become not a *b*, the 'exposition' an 'affliction' to my friends Should we connect this (15) word with the verse of the Koran, 'Have[5] we not expanded thy breast?' or the verse, 'And[6] whomsoever God would guide, he expands his breast unto Islam?' As a matter of fact, it is but a compilation of facts learned by tradition and by analogy It will not give eternal life to one that can recite it, and men have got on well without it. By your precious life I have been afraid my friends would set me on its account among those whose 'breasts had been expanded' to unbelief! Not indeed that I am afraid of any ill-treatment on their part, I have polished no (20) swords, and climbed no heights, and the surpassingly great man is like the high- P 39 stepping horse who is made to contend for one prize after another, and returns from all with 'flying colours,' with never a stumble, indicating his good luck with his bright 'blaze' and the conspicuous ring of hair on his neck I shall not say, 'If any one absent himself, may his arrow be fitted with crooked feathers,' nor

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[1] Tamīm Ibn Aus, one of the followers of the Prophet His devotion is described in the notice of him in Usd Al-Ghabah

[2] Dārī signifies a perfume-dealer

[3] A name for certain shrubs that keep their foliage through the winter

[4] A kādi of Kufah in the early days of Islam, who was beardless The tradition referred to by Abu 'l-'Alā is given in the notice of him in Usd Al-Ghabah In the account of him in Aghāni XVI 35 it is not mentioned

[5] XCIV 1 [6] VI 125

shall I apply to the work of Abu Sa'īd[1] the words of the Koran, 'They shall be
(5) summoned from a far-off place[2]' Still I dislike giving trouble, and would fain avoid doing so, I merely ask that, owing to your unique ability, we may be favoured with your help You yourself are too important and the book too unimportant for me to trouble you to take any steps, though they were as short as the hopping of a *kata*. I will only ask you to be so kind as to favour me with a letter of a few lines, which will be as fragrant as incense, containing good tidings more permeating than the scent of ambergris, together with commands and pro-
(10) hibitions which I shall be no fool if I obey. And now I commit you to God as a miser might commit his treasure to a faithful keeper

P 40

LETTER XII.

To Abu Tāhir Ibn Sabīkah, *who on his journey from Baghdad had been hit in the finger with a spear and badly hurt*

God has blessed us with your safety as he has blessed birds with wings, or as he blesses those who are at death's door with recovery and health. Nor was this one favour, but a series, and I know of no good tidings which I could compare
(5) with them I need not speak of the tidings brought to a king of victory over the enemy, or to the poor man of the acquisition of wealth,—but not even the announcement made to those who have drunk the water of life and been raised from the dry dust to eternal joys in Paradise could compare with this.

Our souls crouch before our Maker, and our fingers are raised in imprecation against the man who stretched out his hand to wound you, may he never follow a travelling beauty, and never while he lives find any abiding rest! May his right hand never help his left! God give him misery, and neither comfort nor long life!
(10) God never fill his cup with milk! Should he approach any friend, may that friend repulse him! Should he ride a beast, may it throw him! God turn him into a lizard in a rocky place[3], where he shall not be safe from the blade of the knife! May he all his life be scratching the ground, whereby his hands and fingers may bleed! May he be left so far as is possible like a falcon with clipped wings[4], that can neither rise from the ground, nor chase other birds! May he never so long as he lives be satisfied with drink, and may the Arab lads be set upon him! May he

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[1] Abu Sa'īd Al-Hasan son of Abdallah, ordinarily known as Al-Sīrāfī, a famous grammarian and critic, author of the most important commentary on the Kitāb of Sībawaihi, ob 368 A brief notice of him in Ibn Khallikan I 162.

[2] XLI 44 [3] Maydāni II 234 [4] Maydāni II 139

want water more than a fish, and may he be set down in a desert where it is uncertain! That he may always be thirsty and alarmed, and have no control over a watering-place (15)

Wealth is only lent us, and there is no shame in losing it. And hopes are like clouds, some of which drift, whereas others shed water. Men can only be blamed for bad actions, not for disappointed hopes. So we beg of the Almighty that he may replace what has been lost, and make us your ransom.

To return, however, to our purpose and recommence, the joy produced by this gift of God was threefold first, that of your father, who rejoiced as much to see you as the tree rejoices in its fruit, secondly, your own on your arrival at Ḥaleb (20) was like that of Al-Dahhak on his arrival at Baram[1], or of the pilgrim when he p. 41 reaches the house of God, and last, not least, mine and that of the rest of our friends, whom God bring together with you in a meeting which we shall approve, and which by His grace shall not terminate Truly we long for you as the labourer longs for his hire, and the child that is frightened by the darkness longs for the light of dawn And as for the commission which you were kind enough to undertake, I could have wished that, important and precious as it is in my eyes, it might be the ransom of one of your saddle-girths, or of your torn shoe-lace. (5) In the words of 'Adi Dhū 'l-Kamar[2] when he slew Bujair son of 'Amr 'Redeem, but no mistake, one latchet of a shoe of Kulaib!' And the fact of your being on this journey compels me to ask for news of the Banū Ja'far as though they were friends, whereas they really are enemies, just as he that suffers from drought might ask where the rain falls, or the raven enquire where is the seed that he can pick up And before we learned the news we were in darkness like that of Al-Kindi[3], for we should dread a hair, thin or thick, hurting you,—how much more the head of a lance! And we thank God, who has caused the misfortune to fall on your (10) goods rather than on your family, and upon what would be consumed by your outgoings, not upon what would touch you keenly. I congratulate you and your father upon your escape, and feel that of its benefits I have the lion's share.

I have already confessed to being troublesome, and had better not repeat myself I am asking you to make the acquaintance of certain persons who, like old clothes, are not smooth, but fit easily I know that one of your journeys is worth all the gold and silver of 'Irāk, but your courage is as well known to me as (15) the striped cloth to the dealer of Yemen, 'and none can tell like him who knows.' And this is a course that does not admit of refinement; and to make the benefit

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[1] Reference obscure

[2] Hamāsah, p 251

[3] i e that mentioned by Imru 'ul-Kais See his Mu'allakah

complete it only remains for you to inform me of the price that has been paid that I may send it at once. Had I been present I could never have accomplished what you have accomplished; nor would it be possible for me to discharge the commission as you can.

(20) I send both you and your father such salutations as will not weary you, though interminable, and the same to your servant Mukbil, who, though his skin be black, is more highly esteemed by us than an untrustworthy white

p. 42

LETTER XIII

To ABU ṬĀHIR AL-MUSHARRIF *son of* 'ALĪ, *on one of the occasions on which he returned from 'Irāk*

In the name of God, &c. Neither the desire of 'Abd al-Muttalib[1] for the woman of Namir, nor that of Kuthayyir for the daughter of the Banu Damrah[2] would win the day if compared with my continuous longing for you, dear master, whom God preserve so long as a house is built in the plains or a birch springs on (5) the eternal hills. It is natural that the flame of longing should burn fiercely when produced by ties of blood, nursed by affection, and fostered by a series of benefits. May God slake my thirst by enabling me to meet you, and may He bless the community by keeping you alive You are the star of those that travel by night, the protector of those that stay at home, their arrow that hits the mark. I pray God He may grant us a meeting after which no separation need be feared, and which will be indissoluble So rejoiced am I at your safety (long may it be continued, and often and again do I think of it) that I have been mixing complaint with gratitude

(10) Since the Bedouins have not been raiding, and the thieves in Baghdad have not been nibbling, and since God has granted earnings such as could not have reasonably been expected, it would have been right for you to restrict your public charity to that troublesome business of provisions which they asked you, and which gave you so much annoyance, annoyance of a kind to which you were not accustomed. But as it is while the need has been lessened the gift has come doubled and trebled, as the Koran says 'you have done a strange action[3],' and as the Arabs

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[1] The mother of his children Al-'Abbās and Dirār (Azrakī, p 287)

[2] 'Azzah, to whom the poems of Kuthayyir were addressed, was of the Banu Damrah Kuthayyir's death date was 105

[3] Koran XVIII 70

say 'both and the dates[1].' Praise be to God who has made us like the people of (15) Bahrain[2] and you like the generous palm-tree whose fruit can be eaten dry or moist, and whose leaves can be taken for garments And were we not anxious to obey you, and afraid to displease you, we should have liked to take the dates and disobey you in the matter of the clothes, being like the people to whom Ibn Al-Zubair said, 'You[3] have eaten my dates and disobeyed my orders.' God make you to be of those 'who when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly, but a mean P 43 between the two[4].' Your conduct would be no prodigality, even though you were to give as it were bucketfuls from the sea; and whether much or little, acceptance of it would be equally excusable. But as for this sum which would be a treasure to a refugee, and capital to a trader, to take it would be improper depredation, whereas the tongue cannot utter a refusal of it Now every fool knows that the (5) Tihamah is full of acacia, and that your generosity exceeds your means, as well as your readiness to undertake journeys and imperil your life, and we only put on airs before strangers, not before relations, and before new friends, not before those of old standing. And a letter was sent from all of us, wherein we swore solemn oaths admitting of no exception that on this journey we should not waste your substance, even though famine should urge its camels And we sent it early, so that it might reach you at Haleb, being afraid of what you might do; and it was neither too short nor too long, and the letter was sent by a traveller named (plague on him!) Mi'yar, who stated that he gave it to the worthy Mukbil, so I do not know (10) whether the letter reached you, and you refused to listen to it, or the carrier made off with his trust. Whichever be the case, we must make atonement for a broken oath, and offer you and your excellent father greetings such as fill their abiding-place with light, and whose breath is fragrant with musk (15)

LETTER XIV.

P 44

To Abu Tāhir, *the author having heard that he intended travelling to Al-Fusṭāṭ without passing by Ma'arrat Al-Nu'mān* [After 400 A. H]

My anxiety to see you (God preserve you!) is fostered by each passing hour, just as a young child is fostered by its nurse, or the kindled spark by tinder—or shall I say like the fire of coals thrown among dry bramble-bushes? For such (5)

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[1] Maydāni II 118 The proverb is supposed to have been spoken by a man who offered three things to one who had asked him for two

[2] In respect of the abundant stores of dates

[3] Maydāni I 66

[4] Koran XXV 67.

produce a blaze to which no amount of language can do justice God will one day quench that burning flame, and remove that mass of care, by bringing us together and making us neighbours too close to need visits. The times by God's grace may become friendly again, albeit for a long time they have been troublous, and the days as you know gloomy. Still, so long as you remain alive, there is no real disaster, and we may hope to see you.

Your letter held out hopes of a happy meeting, but then the times became (10) contrary and vexatious again God couple *you* with luck and good fortune hereafter as before! You hinted in your note that you would not be passing by Ma'arrah; and this woke up a burning sore, and spoiled the pleasure which your letter had aroused. Now since continuous fasting has been forbidden, fasting on consecutive days only being permitted, how much less can continuous absence resulting in continuous disappointment be tolerated? Surely your better plan would be to touch at Ma'arrah without fail, and pay a visit to both the living and (15) the dead. God knows that my dwelling is kept moist with your rain, and that you are my benefactor There are fresh kindnesses of yours that have not been covered up, and old acts which are not likely to be forgotten. And did *I* profess generosity, I should say I had learned it from the family of Sabīkah, whom God make numerous! But such a profession would require evidence, and since the evidence is not forthcoming, it is best to be silent about so doubtful a matter. Your generosity in time of need is like a mountain of gold, or a pillar of emerald, P 45 but you are in the middle of a journey, and one drop after another exhausts the bottle, and one shell added to another makes a collar for the mount Now he who has been offered a pearl and has accepted it is not to be excused for failing to return a string of false pearls when he has borrowed it

I offer you and your father greetings, which, if they could be seen, would sparkle, and if they could be smelt, would be fragrant, worthy to come first like (5) the *takbīr*[1], though put at the end

LETTER XV

Written from Ma'arrah to Abu Bakr Muhammad *son of* Ahmad Al-Ṣābūnī *of Baghdad* [After 400 A. H]

Praise be to the God of heaven from the first breath of life to the last! And (10) God's favour be on the star that rose after the 'interval[2],' and the family that dwarfs all other families God keep you as secure as is a word of three letters

[1] The ejaculation *allāhu akbar* in the Mohammedan prayer

[2] The interval during which there were no prophets, between Christ and Mohammed

from elision for the sake of abbreviation, and may He prolong your existence till the Anbarites one and all become ambergris such as is devoured by the flame. My desire for your society and that of the rest of my acquaintance at Baghdad is like the air which does not congeal, and the fire of the Persians which never went out. And my craving for a sight of you and them is like that of a ruined man for a present, or of a verse of poetry for a rhyme God bring us together by some wise arrangement, making of us a 'sound,' not a 'broken' plural. My existence (15) since I parted from you has been like the last letter[1] of a proper name in the vocative, or the first of a diminutive which is not a pronoun As for the desire I feel for Abu Ahmad, it cannot be committed to writing; and were it to pass by the square of the Banū 'Attāb, what time the water is low, they would think the river had been overflowing And I have submitted a matter to you in which I make you the prop of the business, not a 'prop' in the sense of the grammarians of Kūfah[2]. And my reason for assigning it to you rather than to p 46 any other of my acquaintance is that your name is the same as that of the Prophet who has the right of intercession, while your patronymic is the same as that of the first Caliph And your surname Sābūnī may be analyzed *Sāb, wanī*, of which the former may be connected with *Saub*, a shower of rain, and the latter[3] means a pearl in Ibn Hajar's poem. Now the rain is admired when it produces no more than flowers, how much more when it produces pearls! And your house is in the street called Lotus Street, which is as truly the lotus of wisdom (5) in this world, as the lotus of the extreme end is in heaven, in the district of the oil-merchants, the oil 'which[4] almost gives light before fire touch it! Light upon light! God guides to His light whom He will!'

LETTER XVI

To ABU AHMAD 'ABD AL-SALĀM[5] *son of* AL-HUSAIN. [After 400 A H]

God prolong your existence till 'Urayya[6] be removed, and till the Arabs speak (10) of the Pleiads without the diminutive form; and continue your prosperity until

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[1] Dammah, properly 'closing'

[2] What others call the pronoun of separation

[3] Quoted by Ibn Al-'Arābi, whose words are copied in L A.

[4] Koran XXIV 35.

[5] This person is mentioned in Sakt al-Zand II 101, where his full name is given as above, with the additional epithet المصرى صاحب الدولة, and we are told that Abu 'l-'Alā saw much of him when he was in Baghdad, according to ibid p 112 comm, the son of Abu 'l-Fahm, known as Al-Kādi Al-Tanūkhī, had left with Abu 'l-'Alā a parcel of pre-Mohammedan poems belonging to the tribe Tanūkh, these Abu 'l-'Alā, on leaving Baghdad, had deposited with the person to whom this letter is addressed with injunction to restore them.

[6] Reference obscure.

Irāb[1] turns one morning into a hawk or raven in the sky! Often as I write, my letters do not reach you, and through no fault of mine

> 'How fair a mountain is mount Rayyān[2]! And nobler still he who dwells there! How sweet too those southern breezes that at times reach you from mount Rayyān!'

(15) By Rayyān I mean your dwelling, wherever it may be; and by its inhabitant yourself, wherever you happen to be. And this is allowable in a quotation, just as I may say 'there is no hero like 'Amr[3],' though the person whom I mean be not named 'Amr. And my grief at parting from you is like that of the turtle-dove, which brings pleasure to the hot listener, retired in a thickly-leaved tree from the heat of the summer, like a singer behind a curtain, or a great man hedged off from the frivolous conversation of the vulgar; with a collar on his neck almost burst by his sorrow, were he able, he would wrench it with his p. 47 hand off his neck, out of grief for the companion whom he has abandoned to distress, the comrade whom Noah sent out and left to perish, over whom the doves still mourn. Varied music does he chant in the courts, publishing on the branches the secrets of his hidden woe, if he strike up the note of Al-Gharīd[4], he leaves the lover at death's door, and if he imitate a tune of Ma'bad[5], he does so wondrous well. He summons mourners, such as invite to melancholy, fie upon (5) them, may they be bereaved, who trust not in the Eternal, whose father moaned for Wadd[6], and who have inherited his lamenting from generation to generation. Truly they wail excessively, and yet their eyes shed no tears. I know not, and indeed it is a puzzle, whether it be singing or moaning. Every grey-green bird is like an orator, on moist branch, with a band of pitch on its beak, with fire kindled in its heart, and with its feet dipped in blood, with a collar of coals and a garment of cinder.

Or rather my grief is like that of the she-dove, when she perceives the star of the waste, having dwelt in Yemen till some divine doom brought her to an (10) arid land that had neither dew nor showers, and when she looks at Canopus, it reminds her of companions she had known in the land of Yemen, none

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[1] A spring in the desert (Yākūt).

[2] The highest peak of Aja. The verses are by Jarīr.

[3] Maydāni II 202. The words are supposed to have been said by the wife of Lukmān about her first husband 'Amr son of Tikn.

[4] Famous singer, whose real name was Abū Yazīd 'Abd al-Malik. He is frequently mentioned in the Aghāni, and there is a special account of him in II. 129 sqq.

[5] Another famous singer.

[6] An Arabic Adonis.

of whom had ever dealt unkindly with her; and feeling her throat oppressed with regrets she begins to cry and grieve, alleviating by the emission of these sounds the grief which she feels for the dead, thinking that there is no escape from the confinement of the cage, she wishes that God would change her into a mewing day-cat, or moaning night-wolf, that she might escape by such deliverance from some of her troubles

My abode is Ma'arrah of Nu'mān, and civil strife[1] is rife among us; there are (15) spear-thrusts and bow-shots; and by the time summer comes swords will have been drawn as well Had I been able, I should have used no wood but *markh* for firesticks, and inhabited no city but the capital However, my camel's legs are tied, and God bless Labīd for saying—

> 'When Lubad[2] saw the rest of the vultures fly away, he raised his feathers like a poor man who has no arms'

I offer you, my friends, and your children salutation such as would enliven the (20) waste wilderness, and stretch from Syria to Yemen If it pass by men who are burning a fire of tamarisk, they will think the tamarisk must be aloes, so fragrant will it leave the air

LETTER XVII.

p 48

To his uncle Abu 'l-Ḳāsim 'Ali *son of* Muhammad *son of* Sabīkah, *in reply to a letter concerning* Abu 'l-Hasan Muḥammad *son of* Sa'īd *son of* Sinān

In the name of God, &c. Should I try to describe my longing for your society, I should have to compress and abridge, and hurt my desire by compression, and it would have no way of defending itself This being so, it is (5) but meet and right for me to be satisfied with the inner thoughts, since they convey information with the most becoming expression I pray God to grant us a meeting for mutual kindness which may relieve that pain of separation which wastes our bodies, and save our minds from the anxious expectation of news. On this day, the 7th of Rejeb the noiseless—God make a disturbed time help on your happiness, and render all the months noiseless so far as evil rumours about you are concerned!—your letter reached me, bearing date of the (10)

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[1] Apparently the same sedition is described in Sakt al-Zand II. 121

[2] The last of Lukmān's vultures The verse does not occur in the poems of Labīd edited by Khālidī and Huber, but is quoted by Ibn Kutaibah, p. 209

20th Jumāda ii, written with generous fingers that are earnest in pursuit of good. And when I had grasped its meaning, I thanked God for the safety of your noble person, so assiduous in all your duties. And as for our friend ——, my knowing that you do not doubt about his attachment renders it unnecessary for him to write me a letter.

Now I am a man who have been well treated by my countrymen, and have been assigned a place which I do not deserve. Very likely then our friend (15) listened to what they said about me, and 'he who hears, opines[1]' And albeit I am no niggard, still I am afraid he may be like the diver who puts a leather belt round his waist, and plunging into the waves of the sea, draws out a shell, the acquisition of which leaves him but a spark of life. And when he puts that shell into a merchant's hands, he finds therein an unpleasing thing, neither pearl nor glass I hope, however, that he will find in me one who will be his benefactor and p 49 not abuse him, and give him what will do him good And if he be contented, good, but if he seek anything more, then 'he who seeks is sure to find[2]' For myself, I will acquaint him with what I know, nor shall he have any annoyance in the search, but shall be like one who finds a shell on the seashore, in which if he can find anything of value, he can take it, whereas, if he find nothing, he can throw it away. And, taking into consideration his rank and your (5) desire to assist him, if the lost dove were to return to the ring-doves, they would not rejoice as much in the lost dove's return as I at your arrival. And the present which I send to you and the rest of our friends is a greeting whose bright light may burn, and whose rich perfume may spread like musk, so long as the sky reveals a sun, or day follows day

p 50

LETTER XVIII

Letter to his uncle about an old dame who had been in his service and whom he summoned to Ḥaleb to look after his house. Her brother having fallen ill, she wished to go to him, and Abu 'l-'Alā *having fallen ill likewise, she explained that she was going to him, and that he was in need of her assistance*

(5) In the name of God, &c My desire to be with you yields in no way to that of a grown camel, which grew up in a valley full of *rabl*[3], with green tufts of *salam*, rendering the cattle who feed upon it safe against worms, and after passing a year or more, regarded separation as a vain terror. when some morning the

[1] Maydāni II 263 [2] Cf Maydāni II 279

[3] The account of this plant quoted by Dozy is the following 'odoriferous and oleaginous plant, which grows on the mountains, having an odour resembling that of mint'

horsemen make a raid, and take the grown beasts, leaving the young; and bring our camel from Najd to 'Irāk, where she looks longingly for some cloud with lightning, and whines piteously among the beasts every morning and evening.

This letter, however, is not for the purpose of describing my personal feelings, but rather to tell you of a divine fatality Sukainah, the culprit, was in service (10) with Mu'tadhir[1] in Ma'arrah, from whom she got some poor wage, and when the fruit-season came, she used to pick the grape-clusters from the *samurah;* Mu'tadhir, however, got free of her, 'the cautious one being assailed where he deems himself secure[2],' and she wanted to get back, little caring who was sick. And I shall not, please God, treat her unkindly,—God knows the truth of everything; and some one who is in the habit of speaking to her shall advise her to give up all other things and stick to the loom, as that is healthier and more profitable. And I assure you that had I the fever of Zaid Al-Khail[3], or the scab of 'Āmir son (15) of Al-Tufail[4], I should not have applied for assistance to the young women, let alone an old woman of a past generation. And what should I want from that old dame? God have mercy upon her! I should have wanted to get a substitute for P 51 her to fetch the *su'd* and *sidr*[5] for the bath, and to light the fire, and look after the kettle, so bent is her back, I have been told, and so furrowed is her brow by the lapse of time She is quite without strength in her body, and unable to utter a noun or a verb. It is certain that you can have called for her only to protect her from mischief, and to glance at her with your eyes. And the person who professes relationship to her can only have mentioned her as Sāmah[6] might mention the Banu Lu'ayy, or Mālik Ibn Raib[7] the members of the tribe whom he (5)

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[1] Not otherwise known

[2] Maydāni II 270

[3] An Arab chevalier, who came to pay homage to the Prophet, but caught fever at Medinah, and died almost immediately Aghāni XVI 47

[4] Chief of the Banu 'Āmir in the time of the Prophet, he came on a visit to the Prophet, but refused to accept Islam, and being cursed by the Prophet, died of a scab similar to that which attacks camels Ibn Ishāk, pp 939, 940

[5] Cyperus, and a sort of lotus, used for soap

[6] His story is told by Ibn Ishāk, p 63 He was one of the sons of Lu'ayy, an ancestor of the Prophet, who being driven out of his home by his brother 'Āmir, whose eye he had knocked out, died on camel-back through the bite of a serpent Some verses ascribed to him are quoted l c The meaning of the allusion would seem to be that any relationship claimed could only be of a sort that had been interrupted. See also *Christian Arabic Poets*, I 355.

[7] A robber-poet of the early days of the Umayyads There is an account of him in the Aghāni XIX 163 Sa'īd son of Uthman when appointed governor of Khurasan by Mu'āwiyah offered him 500 dirhems a month on condition of his giving up brigandage, which offer he accepted, the tribe whom he deserted may mean his comrades Cf Jamharah, pp 143–145

deserted. And I beg you, nay I conjure you not to let her see this letter lest she feel what ordinary mortals feel when they hear this sort of thing said about themselves. Had I been able I should have sent to your house the mother of king 'Amr[1] with her two threads of pearls, or Māriyah[2] of Ghassān with her two earrings, to be servants in your house; and they would have been an honour to it. By God's grace I am not ill, so your informants must have obtained some 'mysterious (10) information,' in order to learn about some illness that is to befall me—God keep me from that and other misfortunes hereafter as heretofore! Now I have indeed been ill many times, and never did attendance help me much except this time when I have been attended in such a way that if the sparrow were to perform such service to the kite, the latter would vow never to hunt a small bird again, or if the gazelle were to deal in such a way with the wolf, the wolf would never alarm a goat again. However, this slight indisposition is over; I might, if I liked, eat cock's[3] flesh, only I shall abstain from it as any one should who prefers an (15) hour's health, not to speak of a year's, to the gratification of his appetite. I cannot, however, bring myself to call that indisposition an illness, nor can I reckon my getting over it a recovery. It was merely a trifle to be cured by the letting of some 100 drachms of blood; only my quack doctor forbad any bleeding on the fourth day; whereas the right course would have been to let the bad blood even after the seventh.

(20) We have good news of Abu Tāhir, and hope there will be more to follow; and I send to you and your friends and retainers greetings more fragrant than flowers in spring, and more durable than the Pleiads

p. 52

LETTER XIX.

To ABŪ MANSŪR[4], *Custodian of the Academy of Baghdad.*

In the name of God, &c. Of a truth I am fluttering more with anxiety than pleasure, so that those who would blame me say, 'Is thy passion for the "House of Learning" from folly or sound sense?'

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[1] Hind, mother of 'Amr king of Hīrah For her luxury see Aghānī IX 182

[2] Maydānī I 192 has a proverb, 'take it even at the price of the two earrings of Māriyah.' 'The daughter of Zālim son of Wahb, she gave her two earrings to the Ka'bah, each having on it a pearl the size of a pigeon's egg, such as had never been seen before, and were quite priceless'

[3] A cock was apparently not ordinarily regarded as a delicacy, in Aghānī XVIII 33, a story is told of a cock flying into a house and being killed and roasted, for which act the people in the house were afterwards reproached

[4] The poem in Sakt al-Zand II. 121, to which allusion is made in this letter, is addressed to this person The 'Academy' was Abu Nasr Sābūr's house, Ibn Khall I 250

'By heaven[1] I know not, when I think of her, whether my morning prayer was two or eight inclinations'

God prolong your existence so long as camel-rings are let loose in the (5) morning, or night-journey be made in the dark. My desire for you and the rest of my friends is like that of a ring-dove, full of yearning with nothing to excite it, since she had a lofty home in Meccah, whither the hands of the wanton could not reach And when fate's inevitable decree comes upon her, it brings her out of the sacred territory, and she is waylaid by a petulant lad, who cares not to avoid forbidden things, who breaks her wing with a stone, driving offspring and alliance from her mind And he confines her in a secure dove-cote, whose inhabitants cannot escape, she is consoled by the light of dawn, but her pain (10) increases at midday; for when she sees the birds of the air at large, her head almost bursts with grief; for separation never came into her mind, until misfortune drove her from her nest.

'She[2] has two chicks left to starve, and their nest is torn by the winds. When they hear the wind blowing, they raise their heads; but their mother is already foredone by the appointed doom.'

Each time the raven says caw! I fancy it is a mounted messenger from Baghdad. (15) And I have wearied out both couriers and cawers, and the raven will not answer any questions, and I find the couriers know nothing of what I ask And I am like Dabbah[3] son of Udd, who, whenever an 'Amr or Zaid appeared, asked about Sa'd and Su'aid, and when the figure came within sight, it was found to be neither Su'aid nor Sa'd And if any person came bringing any information, I would say with the sister of 'Amr, 'a fragrant breeze clad in a garment of Kiṭr[4].'

I ask of God's mercy that we may be brought together again like the Pointers, p 53 never to part—such a reunion as he who enjoys lacks nothing afterwards. And had not fate laid a bond upon me, a tedious journey would not have kept me from you, but as it is I am caught in the net, and might seem to be the person referred to by the 'camel-driver[5]'—

'Like a bird, whose wing the archers have broken, which, lying on the kerb, calls its mate'

Now my letters to Baghdad in past times were like the birds of a nest which (5)

[1] Verse of Dhu 'l-Rummah [2] Hamāsah, p 577 Verses of Nusaib.

[3] Maydāni I 277 The story is told ibid I 163

[4] The proverb is 'scent and the smell of 'Amr' (Jamharat al-amthāl, p 146) Kitr was in Bahrain

[5] i e the poet called Al Rā'ī, supra, p 17, n 1 The verse is quoted in L A IV 445

went off early in the morning, one after another, seeking the bounty of the Lord in the land; but they get no answer, so that they might seem to have strayed, to have been trapped like gazelles in the plain, and to have come to grief while seeking the right path However, it is quite right that I should be put to trouble, and I find no fault if I have to put up with privation. Now I should mention that I composed a poem in your honour in the Tawīl metre, no. 1, rhyming in the hard palatal (*T*) with two constant letters and one vowel; ending in an open (10) syllable with a *ṣilah* after the rhyming letter; and I know not whether this poem has been made away with, or whether it is in prison and cannot get forth 'We[1] ask God's help against their conceits'

> 'I chose[2] out from Na'mān a piece of arāk wood for Hind; but who is to bring it to her?'

And were not too much complimenting tedious, and repetition a sort of reproach, I should have sent another copy by the bearer of this letter, who seems to be (15) a worthy wight And I present such greetings as were they to pass by a heap of dust would make it resemble a heap of musk; were they to approach one of foul breath, you would think he had been perfumed, were they to go near a thirsty garden, they would be a substitute for rain. And if you charge me with anything you desire, I shall be mightily proud of your commands

P 54

LETTER XX.

To ABU 'L-HASAN 'ALI *son of* 'ABD AL-MUN'IM *son of* SINĀN, *in reply to a letter of his about* ABU 'L-HASAN MUHAMMAD *son of* SA'ĪD *son of* SINĀN[3]

My anxiety to see you is as permanent as time, which is not exhausted by months and years, and as often as one period elapses, another comes to take its (5) place. I pray God that we may meet in a way that will leave no room for parting; such as will resemble the union of the Pleiads in constancy, and in fragrance a garden that has enjoyed the spring rain. I received your letter, which was a joyous document to me, albeit the people of Ma'arrah will not relish what it contains. I inhaled from it a perfume like that of Indian ambergris, and

[1] Koran XII 18

[2] A verse quoted in Al-'Ikd Al-farīd III 198 among verses the sound of which caused a hearer to fall down dead It was recited by a singing girl at the court of Yazīd son of Mu'awiyah The author was Al-Murakkish Al-Akbar, Aghāni X 128, where it is stated that very few could name the writer of the poem in which it occurred

[3] The person to whom Letter XL is directed

Nejdian flowers after the rain. Its fragrance filled our nostrils, and put earrings on our ears. And I answered it on Sunday the 20th of Sha'bān as it is called in the new style, or 'Ādil as it was called in the old. May God make every new (10) moon bring you some great good luck! As for your cousin Abu 'l-Hasan, I have no control over him, my sword having become quite blunt. What can I do with a man who has been trained and practised in fighting with rebellious unbelievers, and gone through a course of law to enable him to beat down Satan under his feet?—a man who has fought with both men and spirits, and to whom God has given the victory over both these races? Nor can I have any prior obligation upon him which should compel him to obey when I order; I have indeed offered him counsel, and exhorted him, reminded him of the value of the reward, and (15) have urged him not to abandon us, and in the end had to repeat the words of the Koran, 'exhorting[1] the unbelievers is only unto error' I might as well have been whispering to an ostrich, or floating an inflated skin up a mountain. The Kādi Abu Ja'far indeed exhorts, but does not constrain, and it is only in the presence of our Amīr Abu Nasr[2] that our success is prolonged and not contracted p 55 And if my letter have reached him, I have hopes that it may have influenced him Now this city has been given the same relation to Abu 'l-Hasan that Medinah bore to the Prophet, or the desert bears to the Bedouin; nor can we wonder at any such occurrence · God by His own wise decree placed His Prophet 'in[3] a valley without vegetation.' And we often see a man of mark, who (5) has in his house women of high degree, setting above them a slave-girl in a striped gown, whom he purchased for a few coins And so we may see a man whose grandfather on the father's side is a fair-haired descendant of 'Ali, while his maternal grandfather is a black idolater. And for some such reason 'Antarah[4] was born black as a raven, and Nadbah produced Khufāf[5] Were it not for the Ḳādi Abu Ja'far, his visit to this city would be like the vulture, who is a king and a chieftain among birds, and from whose limbs there issues a musk-like odour, (10) falling on a foul carcase. This is such an epithet as may be applied to Ma'arrah, which is the opposite of the Paradise described by the Koran, 'the Garden[6] which is promised to those that fear, wherein are rivers of water that does not corrupt,' &c. Her very name 'mischief' is ominous, God save us from it! The water-

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[1] Koran XIII 15

[2] The person to whom Letter XXIV is addressed; he held some post at the court of 'Azīz al-daulah.

[3] Koran XIV 40

[4] Aghāni VII 148, his father was an Arab and his mother an Abyssinian

[5] An early poet, called one of the 'ravens' of the Arabs His mother Nadbah was a black.

[6] Koran XLVII. 16

courses are blocked up, and the surface of its mould in summer is dry It has no flowing water, and no rare trees can be planted there. When a slaughtered (15) beast is offered to the inhabitants by which they might hope to profit, you would fancy it had been dyed with indigo, yet still they gaze at it as longingly as at the new moon that marks the end of the fasting-month And there comes a time when a goat there is as precious as Capricorn, and a ram of inferior breed as rare as the Ram of the heavens; when the poor get up earlier to look for alms than a crow with two chicks, when a man standing by a milk-seller fancies himself standing in Paradise asking for the water of life. And if he come not before dawn he must return empty, and his arrow be idly spent. And what think you of a place which gives not as much milk as a camel with dry udders produces? (20) If Ibn Ḥinzābah[1] were to stop there, he could not find a parsnip As for sweet juiced plants, and birds with 'painted plumage,' while the former would elsewhere be thrown away on the river-bank, they are here valued like molten gold, and as for the latter, if one is wanted here for a sick man, it is as hard to find as a friend And the broken eggshells of birds that swoop are accounted among us as valuable as precious pearls exhibited in the windows Nay more, praise be to God, we have in the winter fruits in rich places, which like white belles, being ashamed to be seen (25) nude, remain all day covered with earth, and though growing in the wet, are more spotlessly white than the daughters of Caesar, being like maidens' breasts to look p. 56 at, with locks that are green for black They appear when *Spica* rises, until *Sa'd bula'*[2] appears, and they remain after that till the rising of the prior *Fargh*[3] Whoso eats them[4] is sure to repent I shall not eat them, nor advise any one else to do so

I have given my advice quite freely, and if Abu 'l-Hasan will accept my friendly counsel, it will not be long before he visits Haleb. But 'only those who are obeyed can advise[5]' And I and —— and —— offer your excellence and (5) your excellence's father greetings similar to those sent by Dhu 'l-Rummah to Mayyah, and Al-Hādirah[6] to Sumayy And we beg you to favour us with a communication containing a notification of whatever you may desire.

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[1] A wealthy Vizier of Kāfūr, also a great naturalist, Ibn Khall I 139, F W I 134

[2] Three stars left of Aquarius, which rise the last night but one of January. Spica rises October 9

[3] March 9

[4] The 'fruit' to which the author refers would seem to be the mushroom According to Arabic authors the spring is the best time for them

[5] Maydāni II 204. The saying is ascribed to 'Ali

[6] Aghāni III 81-84 Hādirah was a pre-Mohammedan poet, of little note

LETTER XXI.

Answer to an epistle from Abu 'l-Kāsim al-Maghribi[1] (10)

Whenever I feel on my last legs, I receive a fresh lease of life by receiving a salutation from you, which makes me feel like a garden on a hill-side, or a cloud full of lightning and rain. Were I satisfied with myself, I should do myself the honour of a visit to you, but I do not feel satisfied, and seem close to my last end My nest is dispersed, and my will vacillating; I am reckoned among those of whom the Koran says, 'They[2] are a people whose time is gone by, (15) they have what they earned, and ye have what ye earned; and ye are not responsible for what they did' But whether I be happy or unhappy, I shall always pray for you

LETTER XXII.

p. 57

Answer to Abu Manṣūr[3] Muhammad *son of* Shakhtakin.

No apathy has diverted my mind from thinking of you; on the contrary, my heart is full of memories of you, and where there is union of hearts, distance of habitation does little harm My desire to meet you is still as ever mature in vigour, infantile in power of growth and development. I pray the merciful God to grant us such fellowship as is followed by no further parting; and such as time can neither overcloud nor put an end to. I read what you told me about the camel-driver, and 'may God take vengeance on every treacherous camel-driver,' (5) even though this imprecation include the *mukāri* of Jarir, I mean in his line 'which imitates the *mukāri akhnasi*[4],' meaning the camel's shadow, which seems to plunge into the ground.

I am grieved to hear of your risking yourself on the sea; surely you must have read in Ibn Al-A'rābi's *Anecdotes* the verses of Yahyā[5] Ibn Ṭālib Al-Ḥanafī—

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[1] See Introduction to Letter I [2] Koran II 135

[3] The person to whom this letter is addressed would seem to be the same as the hero of Letter V, nothing seems to be known of him

[4] The rest of the verse is given in T A X 313

لحقت واصحابى على كل حسرة مروح تبارى الاحمشى المكاريا

The line was of doubtful reading and interpretation, the reading recorded would mean 'a camel's shadow.' The other reading was 'Ahmasi,' which would be a tribal name

[5] Poet of the time of Al-Rashid, see Aghāni XX 150

'When a caravan makes for Yemamah, passion calls you, and memories are (10) roused in your heart. Surely it is better to drink among the sand-heaps foul water mixed with pure than to venture on the sea.'

And Damascus is the dearly loved bride of Syria, and the chief jewel of her necklet; and I may hope that the Mosque of Damascus has made you forget the Mosque of Al-Medinah, and that its water has consoled you for the water of the Tigris. I have indeed told you ere this that he who leaves Baghdad finds no place that will do instead, however well-watered it be; for there the old learning is still fresh, whereas sound knowledge is sickly elsewhere. Syria is more friendly (15) and less expensive.

'You[1] will find in every city, if you only settle there, friends and neighbours instead of those you have left.'

You tell me you have been trying to amuse yourself with copying, which is like what Al-A'sha says—

'One cup I drank for pleasure; and with another I tried to cure myself of the first.'

p 58 Were your pen a Ḥātim for generosity, it would stop, or an 'Amr for bravery, it would grow weary of its strokes. And I had hoped that you would find companions like those of Ghassān about whom Hassān[2] wrote—

'How good a company were they who entertained me one day at Jillik in the olden time!'

Now whoso deals kindly with you, does so in the first place to himself, and pays (5) the debt he owes himself. And I offer you greetings with smiling countenance and pervading perfume.

LETTER XXIII.

To some Poet *or other*

God preserve your good example to the poets and your poetry to the kings! You have long sucked the breast of learning, and led your camels in pursuit of rhymes, had poesy any child, you would have been he, and if any one could

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[1] Hamāsah, p 137 Verse of an unknown author

[2] See his Dīwān, ed Tunis, p 72 The verse is inaccurately cited, the word طراز, which Abu 'l-'Alā substitutes for رمان of the original, giving no meaning here, though it occurs a line lower down in the poem. The word Jillik, according to Yākūt, is a name for Damascus or its immediate vicinity

inhabit a 'house' of verse, you would And I am as desirous to see you as is a Bedouin woman to see her thatch[1], or a ring-dove to find her missing mate. (10) I have received your verses; the relations between us are not so strained as to require any nursing, nor is there any danger of their being broken off and requiring strings of verse to stitch them together again. And methinks, if you are able, you will have ready against the day of judgement some fine verses to win the good graces of the Guardians of Paradise. Now I have been informed by a good authority that you have taken to devotion, and become a strict adherent of religious discipline; having become as Aʿsha of Bakr says,

> 'Know[2] that your brother, whose nights with us at Jifār you know all about, (15) has after a gay youth become a sage, and covered his white hairs with a hood of wisdom'

And my friend —— would gladly, if he had been able, have put the enclosed dirhems with the rest of your receipts from him, and still more gladly have substituted dinars for them And I offer you special greetings, &c. (20)

LETTER XXIV

P 59

To Abu Nasr Sadakah Ibn Yūsuf Al-Fallāhī, *when he endeavoured to obtain promotion for him at the Court of the* Amir ʿAzīz[3] al-daulah [? 410 A. H]

Were I to offer your excellence the spring decked in its most precious treasures, I should think I had done less than was your due; what then can I say, when I am unable to offer a flower or to fish up an oyster, let alone (5) a pearl! However, 'the scout[4] tells no lies to his employers,' and if a slave speak false to his master, he gets no good therefrom, but rather loses. He is stupid who does not remember yesterday, and ignorant who does not know himself. And so I say to my deceitful self, 'you[5] did not please me when your teeth were white, how much less when they are gone?' It is useless to teach the old, as useless as to squeeze water out of a burning coal. If I lie, then may I forfeit all good!

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[1] i e her hut. Verses by such women are quoted by Ibn ʿArabi Muhādarāt II. 31

[2] Quoted by Yākūt, s v Jifār, which he locates in Nejd

[3] This prince, whose name occurs several times in these letters, is called ʿAzīz al-mulk by Ibn Al-Athīr, from the history of Aleppo, of which Freytag gives an abstract in the preface to his *Selecta ex historia Halebi*, we learn that he was Al-Hākim's governor there 407–411 In 411 he threw up his allegiance to Al-Hākim, and in 412 was murdered For Sadakah see Index of Subjects, Yūsuf Ibn Sadakah, p 152

[4] Maydānī II 196

[5] Maydānī II 5

I did not retire from the world till I had both worked and played, and finding myself unfit for either, I had to be satisfied with *ennui*.

(10) No ring-dove whose fondness is proverbial, which had been in a secure nest amid trees and branches, with a companion of her own species, with whom she used to communicate in song, dwelling in Na'mān rich in arāk, where she was secure from the fowler's toils,—which, betrayed by destiny, against which no (15) caution can avail, has left the sacred territory, in a love-fit, and been trapped by a treacherous lad, who puts her in a bird-cage, and keeps all food from her,—which, when out of the lattice of her nest, she sees the other doves on their morning flight, passes the time in pangs like those of death, asking her brother with her eyes what her chicks are doing, and receiving for answer that they are perishing, being hidden by the leaves from all eyes—

> 'Two chicks[1] that spread their wings at morning-time, whenever they hear the wind blow or the raven croak;'

p. 60 —no such dove, I say, desires a life of comfort more than I desire the Amir's presence; however, fate has followed its ordinary course, and an obstacle has come between me and good, 'the[2] choking in our throats prevents our speaking,' and the rattle keeps us from reciting poems. The fountain is of clear blue water, but none the less the sick man is choked by the draught

> 'When[3] Lubad saw that the vultures had all fled, he raised his feathers like a poor man, who has no arms.'

(5) 'Arise Lubad[4]!' Nay, nay, eternity prevents it!

The day I received your letter containing so many undeserved compliments, the ravens all came to wish me good luck with treble and decuple caws; if any of them made a friend of me, I would present him, if he wanted, with anklets for his legs and a collar for his neck; and would smear his wings with musk and ambergris, and clothe him with embroidery and Yemen work, albeit he struts already in the fairest of the garments of youth.

(10) Ah, raven! Misfortune hereafter be for others, not for thee! If God please, I shall give thee such food as shall please thee most, a tax to be paid by me not every year, but every day

Your dear letter might have been a box of ointment, diffusing fresh perfume; methought I had been visited by a Nejdian garden, watered by the moon's stations in Leo, till its soil grew fat, and fragrance spread from it—and its

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[1] Verse of Sakhr Al-Ghayy in Kosegarten's Dīwān of Hudhail, p 7

[2] Maydāni I 159

[3] Supra, p 55

[4] Supposed to have been said by Lukmān to Lubad when the latter was dying Maydāni I 363

buphthalmum showed to the eye like little dinars fresh from the mint, and it put on ornaments of agate-like anemones, and with the water playing in it, it, (15) although earth, looked like heaven, with flowers for stars, and dew distilling from the trees like tears And I besought the messenger to favour me by leaving it with me, that I might enjoy therefrom something like your protecting cloud in a hot month, and be like one seated near a garden, who, even though he cannot see the beautiful view, still can inhale the fragrant odour.

Now the populace, seeing me during the early days of my youth enjoy the companionship of ancient lore, called me a scholar, very wrongly; and others, seeing me forced to practise resignation, called me an ascetic, albeit I am keen in (20) the pursuit of worldly things. And people talked more and more about me, till I grew afraid I might become one of those ignorant folk about whom the tradition says, *God will*[1] *not take away knowledge by removing it from men's breasts, but rather by slaying the learned, so that, no learned man being left, the people will take ignorant ones for their chiefs, who will give judgement, when asked, without knowledge, going astray, and leading others astray after them.* So I decided to stick to my house like a man who has been dead three or four days, and (25) I became the victim of an unmentionable complaint, such as prevented my attending mosque on Friday, albeit the Koran says, 'O ye[2] that believe, when ye are summoned to prayer on Friday, hasten to the mention of God!' Now I have only mentioned this in order that my lord 'Azīz al-daulah may know that p 61 I am kept away from his service by a disease which prevents my performing even my religious duties, and that one man may be very famous, while it is another who is really eminent. Many a thorny bush is there with but scanty shade and bitter fruit, called *samurah*, and surnamed 'mother of demons,' that is famed in the remotest regions, while other fruitful trees are not known, when called to mind. Names do not prove any real superiority in their subjects, many a hideous (5) ill-smelling black is called Camphor or Amber, many an ugly creature has the name 'New Moon,' or 'Full Moon.' How is it possible for me to be learned when I am blind,—a misfortune 'which it is sufficient to name[3]?' Then I was brought up in a city which contains no scholars, and the vine cannot grow without trellis-work to cling to. Nor am I rich—and how can 'camel-driving be done without a camel[4],' or 'the bow be twanged unless it first be strung[5]?' And if you have ever heard of a night-traveller laying hands on Canopus, or of the earth bringing forth embroidery and silk, or a cloud raining wine and spice, you are (10)

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[1] This tradition is quoted in the Tibyān of Jāḥiz I 102, cf Al-'Iḳd Al-farīd I 154

[2] Koran LXII 9

[3] Maydānī I 60

[4] Maydānī II 111

[5] Maydānī II 303

quite able to set such fabrications right. It is enough for the earth to produce sweet and bitter herbs, for the cloud that rises in the sky to give water to the thirsty. Our night-journey has now been protracted until dawn I deeply regret the loss of this post; but how is the dove to get at the star which guides in the desert, or he that sleeps by the thorn-bush to get next morning to the Pointer? If a man be not fit to associate with his equals, how can he dare to meet the great lords?

(15) 'Truly[1] thou hadst been heard hadst thou called a living being, but that which thou callest has no life.'

Can I hope for a recompense from God, being like the victims of Badr, hearing, but unable to answer? To obtain such honours many a scholar has kept wakeful nights, the ocean is before us, but the swimmers are nowhere and the lightning flashes, but where is the gazer? The tribe is from home, 'ah, would[2] that I had been with them that I might have gained a mighty prize!'

Now our prince 'Azīz al-daulah can indeed help a broken limb by binding, but (20) how can he order a dead man to be raised from the grave? Had I been free from this defect, I should have been afraid of being found out and disgraced, for the description that has been given of me is not correct. And our prince 'Azīz al-daulah is unlike other princes and lords. the word *fāris* applies to him in many senses he *lacerates* his rivals like a lion, he *rides* on a stately charger, and he is *sagacious* as well free from pride and vainglory. Now a man is ashamed (25) before his peers, how much more before the prince and hero of the age! Think how crestfallen would be the girl said to be white, graceful as a water-lily, discreet, prudent, an ornament when unadorned to the assembly, with eyes of clear colour p 62 and swan-like neck,—who, when the wedding-day comes, is discovered to be quite the reverse, her white colour being a horrid black, and her gracefulness deformity, her pure eyes being of different colours and grey and livid, and her swan-like neck dumpy, and is besides a fool and a gossip, no possible object of affection! Besides the proverb says, 'It[3] is better to hear of Mu'aidi than to see him'

I shall not be satisfied with offering you the greeting of Nusaib[4], who was content to salute ten times at morn and ten at night I send his highness the (5) prince the greeting of a grateful and loving servant, a greeting which joins sunrise

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[1] Aghāni XIII. 153, verse of Abd Al-Rahmān B Al-Hakam

[2] Koran IV. 75 [3] Maydāni I 108.

[4] There were two poets of this name, about both of whom there is some information in the Aghāni, but the verse referred to is by Kais Ibn Dhuraih, Aghāni VIII 124

to sunset, and continues the attack with the rise of Hesperus till the time when the garments of night are rent; a greeting which, passing by the dusty plain, renders it fragrant as Indian perfume.

LETTER XXV.

To the KĀDI ABU 'L-TAYYIB ṬĀHIR *son of* 'ABDALLAH[1], *resident in Baghdad.* (10) *The letter was never finished so as to reach its destination*

In the name of God, &c. God prolong the life of the Ḳāḍi, the rescuer of the helpless, and the successor of Al-Shāfi'i as long as 'the option of the sitting[2]' is permissible, and the restraint of bankrupts requisite; and preserve your power so long as the grammarians chatter about 'Amr and Zaid, and *ruwaid* remains a diminutive. This letter is from the inhabitant of the city called after Nu'mān, written on the 9th of Ramadān—God make all your months proud with pros- (15) perity, and the earth bright and pure by the continuance of your days! Now my news at the commencement are the name of the foot[3] which is free from contraction, and my tongue moves as ceaselessly in gratitude to you as if it were the 'perfect' metre. Praise be to God so long as the act of purchase requires a contract, or whelp is born to lion, and God be gracious to Mohammed and his family till the order of pilgrimage can dispense with the circuit, or a poem can do p 63 without a rhyme. And my desire for your noble presence is like that of a dove caged in Yemamah, caught on a rainy day, and thrown into prison, after its Nejdian home, a dove that is neither ransomed nor set free, which has left its comrades never to return, and whenever morn arises, sounds its rhyme.

I pray God to facilitate my journey to your happy hall on some surefooted beast with but one foal, with eyes like caves, with broad sides rare as the 'desert (5) eagle,' or another creature[4], painted with pitch, albeit for no disease, that has never set foot on desert, that is not affected by want of pasture, and knows nothing of four days without water or five, and why indeed should it fear thirst, when it only gallops on the water?

And I would have you know that I love you as truly as if I had been commanded to, with love that has no time limit like a loan, in which I am as firm as is the believer in his faith, and of which I am as proud as is a string of its pearls

[1] An account of this person is given by Ibn Khallikan I 292–294

[2] The right of annulling a contract so long as the parties have not left the room in which it was made See Minhaj al-Talibin, ed Berg, I 369

[3] i e. 'sound'

[4] i e. 'a ship.' Cf S. Z I 160.

(10) And on this day, the —th of ——, I received a visit from your friend Abu Sa'īd of Khwārizm, on his way to God's sacred house; God help him to obtain his desires, and deliver him from calamity and disaster! And he gave me such news of your health as will give pleasure to every Moslem, learned or unlearned; and he seemed to be so weighted with your benefits that he had neither thought nor fancy for ought but you. And he informed me that he had a letter with him (15) graved and adorned by your fingers, but that the Bedouins had seized it, and carried it off with the rest of his papers. Fine fellows! Did they think its lines necklets, or its rhetorical jewels actual ones? Or did some sweet perfume of ambergris or musk get wafted to them from it, so that they supposed it an image of perfume made out of fresh Indian herbs? Had they known what it was, they would have paid it reverence and respect, and if eloquence remain among them, (20) they would have covered it with a shield!

p 64

LETTER XXVI.

Part of the answer to a set of questions recorded by 'URĀM[1].

Praise to God, &c Bravo, owner of the seventh of the arrows, the most advantageous of the lot to the miser, and the arrow which can best dispense with the liberal Auspicious parallels be drawn to thee, not the likeness of 'Adī[2] and Bujair! You, who bring me a branch of the tree of which bows are made, know that my time for archery is gone by! Have you not heard (God prolong your (5) power!) that I have cast my learning 'after Kulaib,' and tied it to a lizard's ear! It has taken 'the road of 'Unsulain[3],' and been divided between two swords. I have parted from it as the nestling parts from the *zān*-tree, or the poet of Bakr[4] with the sister of Hizzān.

'Who[5], O face of love, has brought thee to youths and maids with loose

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[1] The name 'Urām occurs as that of a geographer, who wrote a book on the names of the hills of the Tihamah, but as the editor of this book died in 368, he must be put earlier. Perhaps, however, the words mean 'which it is unnecessary to record' (cf S. Z I 107)

[2] Hamāsah, p 254 Both were killed. For Kulaib see ibid 421

[3] Maydānī I 50 Said to be a road from Yemamah to Basrah The source of the proverb is a line of Farazdak

[4] Al-A'sha Aghānī VIII 83 'Al-A'sha married a woman of 'Anazah, and, to go further, of Hizzān, but, not liking her, he divorced her.'

[5] Verses of Al-Hutay'ah, quoted by Yākūt IV 554, but also in the selection of the author's poems in Dīwān Mukhtārāt Al-Shu'ara, p 126. The verses are, as frequently, carelessly cited

tresses, lying on the top of Dhū Ṭuwālah[1], who came to us after the most vigilant of the dogs had slept, and every burner of fire had let it be quenched?'

Were you to ask one of the young men, God bless you, about this, you might (10) obtain a spark out of your firesticks. The discussion of it is skim milk, and stale *ḥalf*[2]. Bint Al-Anwur and the camel-colt Malikh are weary thereof, and it is disgraceful for the full-grown horse[3] to be compared to a colt For other goals than this Badhwah was trained and Katīb ran. And it is a token of nobility not to answer, because, when a saying is not correct, silence is the best answer to it; and, if I have to answer, 'your brother[4] is forced to fight, and is no fighting man' In that case I am like one who rides the back of a strong camel, and meets (15) a traveller from Sahm[5], and asks him about Ṭā'if, and the 'wine-pitchers,' and Ibn Bujrah, and Ḥabib Ibn 'Amr, and 'many[6] a word says leave me alone! God is my succour against your conceits!' He who interposes with this speech is burnt with the fire of envy, and the envious man is like a prattler, and 'the prattler is like one who gathers wood at night[7],' who cannot be sure but that he will lay hold on a viper, and whoso lays hold on that, is face to face with death, and whoso is face to face with death is like yesterday when it is gone This is to show the seeker p 65 after truth that replies are of three kinds, indirect, direct, and one of which mankind are incapable, and that interrupters are of three sorts, the correcting, the captious, and the vexatious; and that poets are of three sorts, those who write correctly, those who write incorrectly, and those who use licence; and that licences are of three sorts, in accordance with analogy, in accordance with usage, and in (5) accordance with neither.

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[1] Name of a place in Burkan, where there was a well (Yākūt, l c) Burkan was a place in Bahrain.

[2] 'The name of a plant.' The reading of the Beyrut edition would mean stale milk.

[3] Maydānī II 234 The names are given in the T A as belonging to famous animals.

[4] Maydānī II 277 There is a proverb 'sometimes silence is an answer,' ibid I 247

[5] Why the Sahmites are particularized is not plain They were a Hudhalite tribe, perhaps, therefore, it would be natural to ask one of them for the interpretation of passages in Hudhalite poems Ibn Bujrah, as he is rightly written in the Beyrut edition, was a wine-dealer mentioned in a poem by Abu Dhu'aib, Aghānī VI 60, the word used in the text for 'wine-pitcher' occurs in that poem also. The Beyrut editor states that Habib Ibn 'Amr was, like Ibn Bujrah, a wine-merchant More probably he is the person whose story is told in the second part of the Dīwān of Hudhail (Wellhausen, *Skizzen*, p 60). Stories about the Sahmites are told by Azrakī, p. 262, and in Aghānī XVI 65.

[6] Maydānī I 248

[7] Maydānī II 266

LETTER XXVII.

Part of the answer to a letter from a man named ABU 'L-HUSAIN[1] AHMAD *son of* 'UTHMĀN AL-NUKTI *of Basrah.*

Joy is abiding, albeit the vision is transient, and love controls the breast, (10) albeit the dwelling is in ruins.

> 'How couldst thou find thy way to give greeting to the ruins in Al-Ghamr[2], altered by the passing ages?'

Welcome to your letter, so long as consonant combines with vowel, and times and places vary! Although as God says, 'And[3] he bethought him after a space—I will tell you the interpretation thereof, so send me.' Truly you have shone both in prose and verse, praise be to God most High, 'who[4] adds to His creation what (15) He pleases, verily God is all-powerful!' Are you Jarīr, most erotic of poets? or Farazdak? Good luck to you, if you be he[5]! Your words excite in me the feelings which the dove roused in Humaid[6], or the lion roused in Abu Zubaid[7] Would I knew who it is within you who speaks in verse, a rebellious Jinn[8], or an 66 angel of special devotion? I cannot make it out; your mind houses the Koran so that no 'Ifrīt[9] can enter there, and the angels have never produced such verses as yours. Indeed, I know of no one who has recorded any verses composed by an angel, whereas some well-known lines are stated to have been composed by the Jinn. For example, many historians assert that the Jinn bewailed Omar son of Al-Khattāb, and composed this verse,

> (5) 'Thou hast accomplished some things, and left behind mischiefs that have not yet burst their buds.'

They state that these lines were heard before the murder of Omar, although in the

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[1] Not apparently otherwise known

[2] Verse of Katāmi, Jamharah, p 151. Al-Ghamr is the name of many places

[3] Koran XII 45

[4] Koran XXXV 1.

[5] Abu Firās was the kunyah (parental name) of Farazdak, there was a later Abu Firās, who belonged to the circle of Saif al-daulah, but the context renders it improbable that the reference is to him

[6] Humaid Ibn Thaur, contemporary of Omar I. See his verses, Kāmil (Eg) II 85.

[7] A poet of the early Umayyad period, see Aghāni XI 32 sqq, where his descriptions of the lion are quoted at length

[8] The question of the inspiration of poets by the Jinn is handled at length in the introduction to the Jamharah of Abu Zaid For a more critical account of the doctrine, see I. Goldziher's Abhandlungen zur Arabischen Philologie, first essay

[9] Evil spirit

Hamāsah [1] they are ascribed to Al-Shammākh [2]. And Ibn Kutaibah [3] in his work on the strange words occurring in the Traditions of the Prophet and his Companions, as well as the Prophet's biographers, records the tradition that Sa'd Ibn 'Ubādah, having turned towards the dust-heap of certain persons, and committed a nuisance, fell down dead, whereupon the Jinn said,

> 'We have slain the chief of the Khazraj, Sa'd son of 'Ubādah; we shot two arrows at him, nor did we miss his heart [4].' (10)

And there are many other verses ascribed to the Jinn, more than can be enumerated, you may indeed quote in favour of the other supposition the words of the Prophet to Hassān Ibn Thābit [5], when he bade him reply to the poets of the Ḳuraish 'the Holy Spirit is with thee,' and it might be alleged that Hassān and other speakers of truth were assisted in their work by the angels.

Bravo, sir! You can write prose without stumbling, and your thoughts in (15) verse are like flying flames, and you can satirize without bathos! When you do so, people think they hear Himyān [6], or Al-Zafayān [7]! You have presented me with fragrant gardens, over the homes whereof the hearts will always linger,—poems in the Ṭawīl metre of surpassing rhythm, in the Kāmil of *perfect* beauty; in the Wāfir, refreshing to the traveller! As an old writer says,

> 'Through [8] them the horse-cloths are shaken off while the cock is still sleeping, and the girths of the horses are fastened, and the horses are set free.'

I hope you will not be offended by what I have said about the Jinn, remem- (20) bering the popular belief among the Arabs that every poet has a Jinn who speaks through his mouth; and doubtless, too, you have repeated the Rejez verses.

> 'Although I be young, and men's eyes turn from me, my demon is the prince of the Jinn, who takes me through all the paths of poetry [9].'

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[1] Hamāsah, p 488, Aghāni VIII 104.

[2] A poet who lived at the commencement of Islam [3] Ob 276

[4] These verses are also quoted by Ibn Kutaibah, Kitāb al-Ma'ārif, p 87, also in the notice of Sa'd in Usd al-Ghabah.

[5] Quoted in the Kāmil of Al-Mubarrad (Wr), p 778, Eg II. 314

[6] Himyān Ibn Kuhāfah Al-Sa'di is mentioned by the T A. as a writer of Rejez, and is occasionally cited in the anthologies

[7] The T A mentions him as a writer of Rejez

[8] A verse of Al-A'sha closely resembling this is quoted in Aghāni VII 81

به تعقد الاحمال فى كل منزل ❖ وتعقد اطراف الحبال وتطلق

[9] Quoted by Rāghib Al-Ispahāni, Muhādarāt II 370

Indeed, so emphatically do they hold this, that they have given these demons names to know them by: Al-A'sha says[1],

(25) 'I called my friend Mishal, and they called Jihinnām against him, saying, Away with the accursed sprite!'

And they suppose Mishal to have been the 'demon' of Al-A'sha, and tell many p. 67 traditions about him, which you have doubtless read.

I was also told by your friend Abu 'l-Kāsim Al-Mubārak Ibn 'Abd Al-'Azīz after Abu 'Abdallah Ibn Khālūyah[2] after Ibn Duraid a tradition to the following effect. Abu Bakr Ibn Duraid[3] informed his friends that he had seen in a dream some one who said to him, 'Why do you write nothing in praise of wine?' He answered, 'What! has Abu Nuwās[4] left me anything to say?' The apparition answered, 'Your verses are better than his in this passage:'

(5) 'Oh the red before mixture, yellow after it, who comest in clothes of narcissus and anemone! Pure thou dost counterfeit the face of beauty, and when subjected to the mixing thou puttest on love's colour!'

Abu Bakr asked the apparition who he was: he replied, 'Your demon.' He gave his name when asked as Abu Zājiyah, and mentioned further that he resided in Mauṣil. The Jinn are further said to have very long lives, the same individual (10) having encountered both Noah and the Prophet. And if these poetic Jinn transmigrate from man to man, it is possible that Nābighah's[5] demon or Imru 'ul-Kais's demon may have taken up his abode with you. Such a thing would be neither new nor strange. But, as you have passed by Mausil in your travels, it seems most probable to me that Abu Zājiyah himself has attached himself to you, out of a desire for your society, for you will have reminded him of his Azdite friend[6]. Doubtless this demon will have turned Moslem, since otherwise he would not care

[1] In the Aghāni VIII 77, Jihinnām is given as the name of a poet who satirized Al-A'sha. The verse itself is quoted in T. A. VIII 235, where it is stated that Jihinnām was a soubriquet of 'Amr Ibn Katan, but ibid. VII 372, where it is also quoted, the same explanation is given as is given here. A Mishal son of Shaitān is mentioned in the Hamāsah. See also Aghāni VIII 101.

[2] His name was Abu Abdallah Husain Ibn Ahmad, ob. 370.

[3] This story is told with some variations by Ibn Khallikan I 631; Abu Nājiyah (as it is there written) according to one account was the name of a Syrian poet who recited these verses to the critic Ibn Duraid, who made certain animadversions on them; according to another they were verses which he said Satan had revealed to him during the night. Ibn Duraid was a famous poet and grammarian, the author of a great number of works; he lived 223-321. He was greatly attached to liquor.

[4] Ob. 195.

[5] Name of two famous poets, Al-Ja'di and Al-Dhubyani respectively.

[6] Ibn Duraid.

for the society of a Commentator on the Koran, an authority on the language of the Prophet, and a man who has professed chastity and orthodoxy from the cradle (15) till he has begun to think of the 'third leg' Moreover, the Prophet said that no man was free from a guardian demon. 'Not even thou, O Prophet of God?' they asked him. 'Not even I,' he answered, 'only I have been helped, and he has turned Moslem.' Indeed your demon could scarcely fail to be converted when you have written on the Sūra Ikhlās[1] only a whole book, of which our good friend Abu Bakr Al-Mu'addib possesses a copy

I will describe the nature of your compositions in accordance with a logical division. Do you deliberately assign particular metres to particular subjects, or do (20) you write without premeditation? If you compose as did the early Arabs by the light of nature, knowing nothing of the doctrine of the *taujih* and the *ishbā'*, how can you have managed to escape error, so as nowhere to shorten the last syllable of the second foot? And yet the greatest of the poets are guilty of this licence,—for instance, most of the rhapsodies give verses of Imru 'ul-Kais the following form[2],

'Many[3] a fair day have they given thee, best of all the day in Dārat Juljul.'

And the following, (25)

'Time[4] is truly nights and days; it continues in no fixed state'

And the verse of Ḥātim Al-Ṭā'ī, p. 68

'When[5] they travel they find no tent to house in, and wear no clothing but a striped garment and a fur.'

Ibn Al-A'rābi quotes the following,

'Truly Hassān Abu Arbad has claws which rise to the sky while he stands still'

But say you kept clear of the licence *kaff*, and that your idiosyncrasy did not (5) lead you to it, as was the case with many of the ancient writers in whose poems it is not found—yet how did you escape the contraction of the penultima of the second foot (*kabḍ*), which is a licence closely allied to *kaff*? To do this by nature would indeed show delicate perception! For very few pre-Mohammedan poems in the Tawīl metre are free from it Imru 'ul-Kais commits it very often,

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[1] Sura CXII

[2] Throughout this passage translation is of little use, since the figures with which the author is dealing cannot be represented in another language The translation which has been given is therefore intended for those who can compare the original

[3] See his Mu'allakah.

[4] Dīwān, ed Ahlwardt, p 124.

[5] Not in his Dīwān

and Nābighah, Zuhair, and A'sha of Ḳais still more frequently than the 'king-
(10) errant[1].' Nābighah says,

> 'Fair[2] of face, with chaste waist-bands, greeted with odoriferous herbs on Palm-Sundays'

And in the same poem,

> 'You[3] may see them behind the people looking out of the backs of their eyes, like old men seated in hare-skins.'

Al-A'sha says,

(15)
> 'Didst[4] thou not hear the teaching of Mohammed, God's prophet, when he taught and testified?'

Zuhair says,

> 'Men[5] ran after them to overtake them, yet did they not overtake them, albeit they neither slackened nor incurred blame.'

Many besides of the later poets employ this licence, e.g Ibn Aus[6],

> 'Flowers have covered thee, deep red, pure white, and bright blue'

(20) And Al-Walīd[7],

> 'I beheld 'Irāk thwart me, so time's will forced me to go to Syria.'

How, too, can you have avoided procatalexis (*kharm*) which poets ancient and modern have agreed to countenance? You know how careful Mutanabbi was about every verse he produced, he would alter verses after they had been published, and avoid licences even when the metre suggested them Nevertheless, he admits
(25) *kharm* in two places, one in the Ṭawīl metre,

> 'God bring[8] no grief to our prince! Still I will bear a portion of his troubles'

p 69 The other in Wāfir,

> 'Even[9] though Ṭay' be base ——'

And how is it that none of those irregularities occur in the first halves of your Ṭawīl verses which occur in those of other poets? There is a verse ascribed to Nābighah,

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[1] Name for Imru 'ul-Kais

[2] Dīwān, ed Ahlwardt, p 3, the first two words are, by a slip of the author's memory, taken from a similar line in the Dīwān of Hudhail (p 80) and substituted for the original

[3] This verse also is inaccurately cited.

[4] Ibn Ishāk, p 256.

[5] Dīwān, ed Ahlwardt, p 91

[6] i e Abu Tammām, p 427 (altered)

[7] i e Buhturī I 60

[8] Mutanabbi, ed. Dieterici, p 467

[9] Ibid p 696

'God reward[1] 'Abs, 'Abs of the family of Baghīd, with the recompense of the barking dogs—and indeed he has done so!' (5)

And Abu[2] Zaid quotes from 'Abd Kais son of Khufāf Al-Burjumī,

'When I came up with them I said, Ho, Tamīm, but where is Tamīm with reference to Ahwad?'

And 'Āmir son of Juwain wrote,

'Are[3] those camels that are marching Hind's escort? Truly my heart is grieved by its forlorn plight Seest thou not how many a herd of camels from Malikāt and from Ṣa'īd is in the hamlet?' (10)

And when you bethought yourself of composing verses in the Wāfir or Kāmil metres, your innate talent kept you from defacing the former of them by the faults called *nakṣ* and *'akl*, and the latter by the faults called *khazl* and *waks*. And indeed the fault called *'akl* is not found in genuine poems of the Arabs Sa'īd[4] son of Mas'adah declared that he had never heard a case, but a verse of Zuhair, assigned by some to his son Ka'b, is quoted,

'And my restraining myself from harming my neighbours, and preserving my affection towards my near brother,' (15)

where there is a case of *'akl* if the *kh* of *'akhi* be single However, Ibn Al-Kalbi asserted that there were Arabs who said *'akhkh*, and if the author of the verse wrote in this dialect, as is possible, this will not be a case of *'akl*. The fault called *nakṣ* is almost as rare, though two verses are quoted as illustrations of it, which, however, admit of another explanation One of them is ascribed to Surākah Al-Bāriki[5], but by others to 'Ubaid Allah son of Kais Al-Rukayyāt Al-Mukhtār son of Abu 'Ubaid had taken the poet prisoner, the poet, though well aware that Mukhtār was an impostor, nevertheless circulated a story in the army that he had seen men on white horses fighting on Mukhtār's side, that they had taken him prisoner, and that he had not seen them afterwards. This story Mukhtār was very ready to accept, and for the sake of it he ordered the poet to be set free. When the poet had got out of Mukhtār's range, he said, (20)

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[1] See Khizānat al-adab I 139 Baghīd was the name of a division of Kais.

[2] Nawādir of Abu Zaid, p 114

[3] Yākūt IV 636 with important differences of reading The irregularity in the second of these verses was making the first half end with *Malikātin*, which is avoided in Yākūt's reading *Malikāninā*

[4] Celebrated grammarian, better known as Al-Akhfash, ob 221

[5] This story with the following verses is told by the historian Ṭabari II 2, 665

(25) 'Tell Abu Ishāk that the white horses I saw were pure black; in fact I made my eye see what it saw not. We both of us have some idea of imposture.'

p 70 Abu Ishāḳ was Mukhtār's paternal name, Sa'īd son of Mas'adah recited the verse with the ordinary form *tarayāhu*, giving a case of *naks*. But he did not deny that the poet might have restored the original form of the word, *tar'ayāhu*, which occurs in another verse[1]:

'And whoso lives long will see and hear.'

(5) The other verse in which *naks* occurs is by Al-Mughīrah son of Habna[2].

''Tis as if the pieces of egg-pulp therein were coverlets tinted with powdered saffron.'

Now the ordinary form is *ghirki'un*, as in the verse of Aus son of Hajar[3]

'Who would give thee that inner envelope which is beneath her shell, like the *ghirki'* of the egg covered by the shell above?'

If the verse be scanned in this way, Mughīrah will have employed the licence called *naḳs*, it is, however, possible that he may have added a *y* by a poetical licence which gives such forms as *tawābīl* for *tawābil*, and *sawā'īd* for *sawā'id*. As (10) the poet of Taghlib[4] says,

'And wings that spread in all directions like arrows flying.'

However, to tell the truth, you are not to be greatly praised for avoiding these two forms of *zihāf*, just as 'Amr son of Kulthūm did not win much praise for avoiding them in his verse,

'Come[5] stir up thy cup and give me a drink,'

(15) nor Nābighah for the verse,

'Does[6] Katām think of giving up her dallying?'

nor Abu Dhu'aib for the line,

'By thy beauty, O wounded heart!'

nor Dhu 'l-Rummah for the line,

(20) 'Does the house of Mayyah cause thy tears to flow, and do the ruins wake up thy love?'

nor any other of the poets, ancient or modern I have only said this in order to show that I am not addressing you any compliments proceeding from an insincere

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[1] Quoted by Abu Zaid, Nawādir, p 185, our text is inaccurate

[2] A poet of the Umayyad age, Aghāni XI 162.

[3] A Jāhili poet

[4] Probably 'Amr son of Kulthūm

[5] In his Mu'allakah, v 1

[6] Dīwān, ed. Ahlwardt, p 27.

breast, as is the custom of the vulgar in praising verse-writers; the Prophet said, 'Frivolity and I have nothing in common,' and Ibn Ahmar says [1],

> 'Say not "what you tell us is vain," grey hairs and purblindness have left me no vanity.'

'Vanity' in this place means falsehood. No; but you are to be praised for avoiding those two forms of *procatalexis* into which poets ordinarily fall, and which they employ both in feet that are sound and that are syncopated, such, for example, as a verse written by one of the idolaters after the Prophet's mission had been delivered, (25) p. 71

> 'No Moslem I while I remain alive, neither is my creed that of the Moslems.'

Or of Hudbah [2],

> 'I am of Kudā'ah; I betray whoso betrays them, but they may be sure of me.' (5)

As for your avoiding procatalexis in verses that have suffered *'akl,* that need not be admired, as the combination of the two has regularly been avoided by both ancient and modern poets alike, and your conduct in avoiding *khazl* and *waks* in the first and second forms of Kāmil is on a par with your avoiding *'akl* and *naks.* Albeit the combination of the former in Kāmil is more common than that of the latter in Wāfir· Al-Rā'i says,

> 'Neither [3] may I come to Abu Khubaib desiring instruction in the truth, and be plunged yet deeper in error.' (10)

And Ta'abbata Sharran [4] says,

> 'When Fahm and Bakr met entire, and the blood flowed between them like a torrent.'

This is a verse of his famous poem in the Kāmil metre, of which the first line is,

> 'Fire that didst blaze, and whose blaze renewed my spirits, in some habitation at Afyād or Mau'il.'

I only notice this that it may not be supposed that the verse containing the *zihāf* is of the Rejez metre, no. 1, for Kāmil 1 and 2, when all the feet are syncopated, are not distinguishable from Rejez 1 and 2, a fact with which you are well acquainted. The licences, however, called *khazl* and *waks* occur more often in the short forms of Kāmil than in the long ones,—so in the verse of 'Antarah, (15)

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[1] Jamharah, p 160 [2] Hamāsah, p 232
[3] Jamharah, p 174 The verse is so inaccurately cited as to be unintelligible
[4] Not apparently in the ordinary collections of his verses. Cf Khizānat al-adab III 351

'O house[1] of Māwiyyah in the plain, built for some grand destiny, built
(20) under Sa'd Al-Su'ūd, not under Al-Debarān and the Scorpion.'

Or the verse of Imru 'ul-Ḳais,

'Laila[2] refuses to meet me any more, she is gone away, and the cords that tied us are rotten'

Nevertheless, it is not so very creditable to avoid these licences, for both in ancient and modern poetry these forms of contraction are rare And you in venturing on (25) this measure have been guided to many forms of exactitude missed by Ḳais son of Zuhair when he wrote his trembling (or, according to Al-Ḳāsim[3], son of Salām, crippled) verse,

p 72 'After[4] the death of Mālik son of Zuhair can women hope for the results of their pure days?'

Similar verses have been composed by other great poets · Abu 'Ubaidah quotes,

'Nawār[5] pined, but got no good, &c'

As for the rhyming letters which you have chosen, they are very correct The *d* (5) which Ṭarafah selected for his Mu'allakah, and Nābighah to describe Al-Mutajarridah, the *b* which is free from all weakness and softness, and is a strong and clearly pronounced letter, of which the hoopoe must be fond, since it repeats it so often. The *m* which is easily articulated, and which is prefixed to the active and passive participles, to the former when they come from roots of four letters or (10) more, to the latter in all cases, the *n* which is the musician among the letters, near of kin to the sound which gives us the case-signs. Further, you have not fettered the hooves[6] of the words, since such fettering is not helpful, but have given *wasls*, *ridfs*, *ta'sis*, thereby bringing the rhyme into prominence I cannot indeed praise you for avoiding false rhymes of vowel or consonant, nor do I regard this as an excellence, for any poet, native or foreign, who knows the

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[1] Not in his Dīwān, in Aghāni XII 53 it is ascribed to Al-Hārith Ibn Al-Tufail, who lived at the beginning of Islam

[2] Dīwān, ed Ahlwardt, p 45

[3] Also known as Abu 'Ubaid, a famous scholar and traditionalist, ob 223.

[4] In Aghāni XVI 28 and Hamāsah, p 447, this verse is assigned to Al-Rabi' son of Ziyad.

[5] The first part of this line is an allusion to a proverb given by Maydāni I. 159, but read and explained in different ways, though the sense is pretty clearly 'pining after what does not come.' The second line refers to a great famine, but is too coarse to translate Both are discussed in Khizānat al-adab II 157–159, cf I 418–420

[6] This would seem to mean that the person addressed did not use close syllables for rhyming syllables The rest of the terms used in the sentence can only be understood by those who have some acquaintance with Arabic poetry

alphabet ought to be able to avoid them, . . but how did you manage to avoid repeating the same rhyme, which both modern and ancient writers have done, writers both copious and scanty? How too did you escape faults in the rhyme (15) itself of which Imru 'ul-Kais and Ziyād are guilty? The following, for example, are ascribed to Imru 'ul-Ḳais

> 'If[1] I say this is a friend with whom I am pleased and in whom I find consolation, I take another in exchange. Such is my fortune, I never associate with a man but he changes and deceives me!'

If you say many editors do not give this verse, and Al-Khalīl allowed this (20) licence, my answer is that others disapproved of it, and that even according to Khalīl it is better to avoid it. And did I not purposely abstain from comparing your open rhymes with any but open rhymes in other writers' poems, Imru 'ul-Ḳais might on Khalīl's principle be said to have committed *sinād* in his poem rhyming in *r*

> 'No[2] by thy father, daughter of 'Āmir, the people shall not say I ran away' (25)

For he regards a difference in the *taujīh* as a case of *sinād* Ibn Duraid in his 'Jamharah' says it is called *Ijāzah*

In Nābighah's poems the tradition fluctuates; in some of the texts there is P 73 a poem rhyming in *h* ascribed to him, which is not found in most of them, commencing—

> 'The[3] two homes of Suʿda in Damkh and Dhu 'l-Ḥusa have been razed some day by the morning and evening rains'

Followed by—

> 'Maybe their hands are knives, and they have slain each other' (5)

Now to make *tadhābahū* rhyme with *rā'ihū* is in Al-Akhfash's opinion a case of *sinād*, and that it is a blemish is proved by the rarity of its occurrence

Having then avoided these serious faults, how could you escape those minor irregularities which the grammarians do not regard as blemishes, and which the old poets did not avoid? I may mention your persistently adhering to the *i*[4] for

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[1] Dīwān, ed Ahlwardt, p. 129

[2] Dīwān, p 126 The second line of the poem quoted ends *subur*, the third *kar*. *Taujīh* is the name given to this vowel, while *sinād* is a general name for false rhyme

[3] According to Yāḳūt, Dhu Husa is a wadi 'in the land of Sharabah, in the territory of 'Abs and Ghatafan' Damkh is given as the name of a mountain The same author says the verse is by Kinanah son of 'Abd Yalil, a contemporary of the Prophet The verse is not given in the printed recensions of Al-Nābighah

[4] In the preface to the Luzūmiyyāt Abu 'l-'Alā insists on this

the vowel to come between the *ta'sīs* and the *rawī*, never substituting for it the *u*, which all allow to be lawful; for it is only the combination of *a* with the other (10) vowels about which there is any difference of opinion. Nābighah in the poem rhyming in *'Ain* says,

'They[1] go to Al'al at a trot,'

and in that which rhymes in *l*,

'The[2] Turks and the Persian tribe and Kābul '

and Abu Dhu'aib says,

(15) 'Hast[3] thou asked the ruined dwelling or hast thou not asked it of its inhabitants or whether it remembers old times?'

And in the same poem,

'If she tighten the rope of affection, be steadfast with her, and if she cut it, then feign ignorance and retreat'

There is another reading, 'be courteous and retreat'

Sakhr Al-Ghayy[4] says,

'By the life of Abu 'Amr, fate has driven him to a grave to be dug for him on (20) the mountains, the chicks never saw her after the evening, neither did they cease chattering in their nest.'

This irregularity is of frequent occurrence in the best poets, and a much more objectionable one is to be found in a poem of Dhu 'l-Rummah

'Truly what has drawn the milk of thine eye is some spot in Jumhūr Huzwa or Jar'ā Mālik.

The jealous husband left them, and the sun burst forth for us on that short but blessed day'

(25) Some excuse may indeed be found for these authors, but what can be said for Al-Buhturī's poem beginning—

'God[5], how bright a time was at Suwaikah!'

which contains the following verses·

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[1] Dīwān, ed. Ahlwardt, p 19 Al'al, according to Yākūt, is a mountain either identical with or in the neighbourhood of 'Arafat

[2] Dīwān, ed Ahlwardt, p 25

[3] Aghānī VI 60 Abu Dhu'aib lived partly during the days of paganism, partly in those of Islam to which he was a convert He was the chief poet of the tribe of Hudhail

[4] Also a Hudhalī poet, whose poems are printed in Kosegarten's Dīwān of Hudhail, see p 6, also Aghānī XX 21

[5] Buhturī, ed Constantinople, I 242

'Thou wast only called the man of two swords, because the cries for succour addressed to thee urged thee to gird thyself with another.' p. 74

Nay, he even went further than this—is it not he who said,

'Add[1] not to ill-doing its sister, the worst ill-doing is to do ill twice? And raise thy hands unto munificence, and be bountiful, the highest places among the people are to the most munificent; like Abu Ṣakr, to whom (5) Shaibān ascribes the greatest munificence; and it rejoices me that no man in a nation is perfect in character who is not perfect in descent'

Buhturī thought that the *elif* in a single word, separated from the next, where the second is not attached to a pronoun nor a pronoun itself, might serve as *ta'sīs*, and be made to rhyme with *wāhd* and *sā'id*, whereas both ancient and modern poets are agreed that it cannot serve as such. The elif that stands alone cannot be made *ta'sīs*. Al-'Ajjāj[2] makes *idhā hajā* rhyme with *kad shajā* in verses of (10) which the sense is—

'What has roused grief and pain that once was keen?'

and,

'They cling to him when he stands still'

'Antarah[3] says,

'Those who revile my honour when I have not reviled them, and who vow to (15) have my blood unless I meet them,'

with *alkahumā damī* in a poem that has not otherwise *ta'sīs*. Only some people grow inattentive in a poem without *ta'sīs*, and insert one, whereas others, out of similar forgetfulness, introduce a verse without *ta'sīs* in a poem intended to have it.

I have studied your poems and find that you employ three metres; of the Tawīl you employ forms 1 and 2. In your verses in Tawīl 1 there is no opportunity for *sinād*, since your penultimate vowel is one which interchanges with no other, whereas *sinād* is only possible in that form of verse with long penultima in which (20) an ending without long penultima can be substituted, or in cases where the long penultima takes the form of *w* or *y*, such are the verses of the man of Zubaid[4].

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[1] Buhturī II 163

[2] An early poet, his name was Abdallah Ibn Ru'bah.

[3] Dīwān, ed Ahlwardt, p 49

[4] The first of these lines is quoted in the Muhādarāt of Al-Rāghib Al-Ispahānī II 373, the whole in Khizānat al-adab II 445; the man of Zubaid is 'Amr Ibn Ma'dī Karība

'Sooner would I have the rattling of the bridle on a charger's head than marriage with thee . Said my mistress when she saw it grizzled (25) between white and black, "How like Zedoary soaked with musk!" 'Twill pain the louse hunters when they search my hair!'

But in verses where the long penultima was *elif*, the Arabs did not admit p 75 alteration, nor did any other writers[1] with poetic genius. In Ṭawīl 2, however, when there is an *elif* of *ta'sīs* two forms of *sinād* may occur, one of the consonant, the other of the vowel. Praise be to God who has kept you from both these disasters! The *sinād* of the consonant is that which Al-Buhturī committed in the verses I have quoted, whereas the vocal *sinād* is that with which Dhu 'l-Rummah protected from mischief the verses of his poem which rhymes in *k* As for your poems in Wāfir 1, they have an *elif* for the penultima, and in consequence are (5) as clear of *w* and *y* as are verses with those letters for penultima from *elif*. Of the Kāmil metre you have used forms 1 and 2, and as for form 1, you have used that without *ridf* or *ta'sīs*, so that the verses admit only of one form of *sinād*, and that a form employed by Buhturī Your verses are therefore as free from *sinād* in all its forms as the 'arrow[2] of Ibn Mukbil, which brought spoil to him that sought it.' As for Kāmil 2, you know of course that *ridf* is necessary, except in certain rare verses ascribed to Imru 'ul-Kais. Your innocence of *sinād* is therefore greater than other people's, since other people in such verses sometimes use the (10) *ridf* and sometimes omit it, whereas you have used the *ridf* regularly

If, however, you write poetry according to metrical rule, how is it that you have only ventured on those metres that are perfect and erect, no such accident happening to you as befell Razīn[3] the metrician when he eulogized Al-Ḥasan Ibn Sahl in his poem rhyming in *k*, of which the first verse was

'Thy nearest friends have made their camels ready to depart next morn?'

(15) And we have observed that many of those who write verse according to rule have tried the metre of Al-Murakkish[4], supposing that people's tastes are not averse to such experiments in these days But you, dear friend, would seem to have combined genius as profound as the ocean with copious acquired learning

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[1] The author is probably not speaking of different languages, but of the different nationalities of the writers of Arabic

[2] 'Ibn Mukbil won ninety times in the arrow-game, never once losing' (Jamharat al-Amthāl of Al-'Askari, Bombay ed p 158) Dozy is mistaken in thinking 'arrow' an error for 'cup' Cf. L.A XIX 274 and Agh XV 120

[3] Razīn is mentioned in the Aghāni VI 11 as a great innovator in poetry, who followed the ideas of Abdallah Ibn Sumaidi' of Basrah, a pupil of Al-Khalīl

[4] The notice in the Aghāni does not explain this.

Your letter implies that I, in your opinion, have slighted your affection and forgotten, in all this long time, our relations Truly in that case 'I were one of the wrong-doers.' You tell me that you are of Basrah; I am quite sure that you are of (20) *Baṣīrah* (intelligence), which is implanted in your mind, and is a better city than Basrah is For Basrah means 'white stones' such as men and cattle trample on. There is a verse of Dhu 'l-Rummah,

> 'When our waterers had poured the water into its conduit for the camels which had been thirsting in the desert, they called to each other *shib, shib*, in that cracked reservoir of which the sides were of "Basrah" and shale'

The people of Basrah are noted for their want of home-sickness[1], you may perhaps have met with a story how there was found inscribed on a stone, (25)

> 'There[2] is no stranger though he make boast of his fortitude, but remembers his home at times of sickness,'

and underneath it some one had written 'except the people of Basrah.' Now if p. 76 such be their conduct in relation to their own people and fellow-citizens, how much less will they care for mere acquaintances? And a proof of what I say is that you have not written my name correctly. You have written *Mohammed*, whereas my name is *Ahmad*, and if you argue that these names are the same, because God says in one place, 'Mohammed[3] the Prophet of God and those that are with him are strenuous against the Unbelievers,' and[4] in another, 'and in a Prophet who shall come after me named Ahmad,' it must be observed that this is true of the Prophet only, since he said, 'My name in heaven is Ahmad, and on (5) earth Mohammed' If any one urges that the Arabs often had two or three names or more, quoting the verse of Duraid son of Al-Simmah,

> 'They cried to each other, saying, "The[5] horses have destroyed a champion,"
> I answered "Is Abdallah the champion that has perished?"'

and from the same poem the verse, (10)

> 'And if time with its days cause us to forget, yet ye shall know, ye sons of Kārib, that we are wroth for Ma'bad,'

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[1] This statement is surprising Of the poets mentioned in the Aghānī many long for Basrah with affection not unlike that of Abu 'l-'Alā for Baghdad So Ibn Al-Mufarrigh (XVII 60), Muhammad Ibn Wuhaib (XVII 141), Ibn 'Uyainah (XVIII 27) Another characteristic of Basrah is to be found in the last Makāmah of Hariri

[2] The verse is also quoted by Ibn 'Arabi, Muhādarāt II 9, with another

[3] Koran XLVIII 29

[4] Koran LXI 6

[5] Hamāsah, p 377, Jamharah, p 117, Aghānī IX 4, *Christian Arabic Poets*, II 758. The verse in which he is called Ma'bad is given in the last of these texts

such a case as this may be explained in one of two ways Either a man may have two names, which is not my case; or the poet may have altered the name to suit the verse. And had you altered my name not in prose but in verse, this would be easily excusable, seeing that the best poets alter names, Al-Ḥuṭay'ah says,

(15) 'And[1] you were not satisfied with them till you had presented them with torrents of a storm-cloud (the family of Bistām) containing spears, containing hard, long, well-fashioned cuirasses of Sallām's make.'

Meaning by *Sallām* Solomon; an alteration against analogy, and on a different principle from that according to which Abu Kābūs and Abu Kubais are both names of Al-Nu'mān Ibn Al-Mundhir, and Zabbār as well as Zubair stands for (20) Al-Zubair Ibn Al-'Awwām These are cases of contracted diminutives, and examples are common, Al-Katāmī says,

'The[2] heart has become tranquil about 'Ulayyah, and the camels are troubled about others than her,'

and in the same poem,

'Is it a glance from a lightning flash that my eye has seen, or the face of 'Āliyah, about which the veil is playing?'

So too Al-Murakkish[3] says,

(25) 'Fātimah, were all womankind in one city and thou in another, still I should follow thee lovingly Hungry and feasting alike I am ashamed before Futaimah.'

p 77 'Amr[4] Ibn Hassān Al-Shaibānī says,

'I beseech thee, mother of 'Amr, blame me not, when the feasters are assembled with their wine What! does my old woman sleeplessly weep and wail over two camels that are dead?

(5) And was Abu Kubais kept alive, bless you, by the wealth of the kingdom and his crowds of cattle? He built in Al-Ghamr a tall gloomy pile on whose sides the doves coo.'

By Abu Kubais he means Abu Kābūs. It is recorded that Safiyyah, daughter of 'Abd Al-Muttalib, had two sons, Al-Zubair and Al-Sā'ib, Al-Sā'ib was undutiful, and she wrote the following verse about him·

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[1] Aghāni XI 29 [2] Jamharah, p. 151

[3] The younger poet of the name who was the nephew of the other The verses are given in Aghāni V 194

[4] One of these verses is cited (in a considerably different form) by Yākūt III 814.

> 'Al-Sā'ib insults me behind the walls, but Zabbār Abu Tāhir deals kindly with me, he spends his money freely, is generous and forgiving'

Zubair is a contracted diminutive of Zabbār, and she uses the original form; we (10) also do not deny that the poets have been known to call a man by his father's name for the sake of the verse; a Rejez-writer[1] says,

> 'They started early from Kāzimah the deserted fortress, bringing 'Abbās son of 'Abd Al-Muttalib'

Aus Ibn Hajar[2] says,

> 'Would you give me the care of her? For I understand cases that have puzzled the leech Hidhyam,'

meaning Ibn Hidhyam Dhu 'l-Rummah, speaking of the second day of Al-Kulāb[3], (15) says,

> 'The night the two Hārithī's fled after Haubar had breathed his last in cavalry combat,'

meaning Ibn Haubar[4], as is shown by the words of 'Umar son of Laja',

> 'And we smote at Kulāb the son of Haubar, and the company of the Banu Dayyān till they were dispersed'

However, I easily pardon you this, and am willing to reckon it not a fault, but an ornament, as being a straw on a seething ocean, or rather the trace of prostration (20) on the brow of a worshipper. Possibly you may say that you concentrated your attention on my surname, making that serve instead of my name, I however have remembered your name, surname, and patronymic, I have forgotten neither the day we met, nor our conversation on that day, and I have made the answer to your letter serve instead of a meeting Do not find fault with me for my lengthy chatter and my interminable haranguing, and for accusing the people of Basrah of want of affection for their home, what I really meant to ascribe to them was firmness and strength of mind—qualities which the Arabs ascribe to themselves. You must have heard the verse of Katādah[5] son of Maslamah the Hanefite, (25)

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[1] Kāmil II 130 (Wright, p 554); Al-'Ikd Al-farīd II 233

[2] Quoted by Ibn Al-Sikkit, *Critique du langage*, p 541, Khizānat al-adab II 232

[3] The second day of Kulāb was that whereon ''Abd Yaghuth collected his followers and attacked the Banu Tamim, the Banu Tamim won the day, and he was captured and killed 'Abd Yaghuth was himself head of the tribe Madhhij, and their attack on Tamim was due to the fact that the fighting men of that tribe had recently been slain by the Persian king' Aghāni XV 73

[4] Their names were Adbar and Mu'awiyah, and Ibn Haubar's name was Yazid. Dhu 'l-Rummah's verses with many others bearing on this battle are quoted Aghāni l c 76-78

[5] Verses of his are quoted in Hamāsah, p 358, but not this

'Men weep for us, but we weep for no one, we are harder-livered than camels'

p. 78 There is another point about your verse that I have carefully scrutinized, not with the view of finding fault, but rather by way of the attention which proceeds from high esteem, you have kept your verses free from licences in both halves of the line, as also in the middle; you have not, e g elided the *tanwīn* as is done in the verse,

'Abu Firās has saved me from what I feared, and one like Abu Firās is enough and more.'

(5) Neither have you elided any where it should not be elided, as Al-A'sha does in the verse,

'And [1] the friend of belles, who when he chooses cut him and become enemies just after being friends.'

Or as Khufāf says,

'Like [2] the sides of the feathers of a dove of Nejd, and thou hast rubbed on thy gums the kuhl-powder'

Neither have you contracted your words except in the vocative, as in the verse,

(10) ''Abbād son of Julhum [3] has ruined his camels; verily the son of Julhum has become the snake of the valley,'

or in that of Zuhair,

'Take [4] your due, ye family of 'Ikrim, yet remember the ties between us, verily blood-connexion is remembered in absence,'

or that of another poet,

'Truly [5] if I desire the sight of the son of Hārith, or praise him, the folk know all about it.'

Nor have you made any such alterations in words as render them unrecog-
(15) nizable, as does Labīd in the hemistich,

'The hou[ses] are in ruins in Mutāli' and Abbān,'

and 'Alkamah in the verse,

'Their [6] pitcher was like an antelope on a hill, girt with stalks of perfumed plants, and reeking with them, a white antelope which its keeper has

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[1] Sībawaihi I 8

[2] Sībawaihi l c.

[3] For Julhumah Verse of Al-Aswad Ibn Ya'fur cited by Sībawaihi I 299

[4] Dīwān, ed Ahlwardt, p 82

[5] Verse of Ibn Habna, Sībawaihi I 299

[6] Dīwān, ed Ahlwardt, p 113 The verses are very inaccurately cited

> exposed to the sun, with linen han[gings] on its neck and a strainer in its mouth;'

and some other poet in a verse quoted by Ibn Al-A'rābī, (20)

> 'Men whose lips are forestalled in tasting the water by animals with long sides and snub tips to their noses.'

Neither have you substituted weak letters for strong, as does a writer in a verse,

> 'A[1] watering-place where there are no crowds, and where the frogs in the water are allowed to croak,'

and another in the verse,

> 'She[2] has slices of meat from foxes on which she puts dates, and morsels of hare.' (25)

Nor have you substituted *sukūn* for a vowel where it should not be substituted, as in the verse,

> 'When[3] they swerved I said, "Friend, keep these camels erect like floating vessels in the desert,"' p 79

or as in a verse cited by Sībawaihi from Imru 'ul-Kais[4],

> 'I will drink to-day, not storing up for myself any guilt against God, and not entering as an uninvited guest'

Nor have you given any nouns wrong formations (I mean ordinary nouns, I leave my own name out, about which I have already spoken) as is done in (5) the verse,

> 'Her mouth was like cold hailstones or the odour of a garden which a light rain has besprinkled,'

where *'abakarrun* is an unknown formation not in Sībawaihi's list, the right form being *'abkarun* like *Ja'farun*

Now a man who has avoided all these licences, as well as others which it would be tedious to enumerate, such as inversion of order and separation of words that are in annexion, as for instance in the line of Farazdak, (10)

> 'There[5] is no trouble that does not each evening and each morning come and return,'

or in the line of Sudaif,

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[1] Sībawaihi I 300

[2] Sībawaihi l c, Al-'Ikd Al-farīd III 122 The Arabic text explains in all these cases what are the licences to which allusion is made

[3] Author unknown

[4] Ed Ahlwardt, p 151

[5] Ed Boucher, p 221

> 'And how[1], when no dispute ever befell thee when thy name was mentioned to mankind?'

or in the line quoted by Abu 'Ubaidah,

(15) > 'And its traces after their beauty are as though a pen had drawn a line'

How, I say, can so cautious a writer have thought fit to contract his friend's surname, to alter his name and contract his surname? 'We are God's, and to God do we return' This must have been a divine decree, no slip on the part of the writer, no carelessness of his, but the ill-luck of the person he addressed, the hard hap of the owner of the name and the appellation Do not say, 'All the (20) poets, ancient and modern, poets by nature and poets by endeavour, have substituted the shortened *elif* for the lengthened,' for had you admitted any other licence I should have allowed this argument, but, as I have shown, you have steadily abstained from them all, and avoided every flaw And I only complain of this because I am contracted in spirit, contracted in hand, contracted in sight (that is, blind), contracted to my dwelling (that is, confined to it) like a prisoner, and all this together with contraction of frame was not sufficient, but I must needs have my name contracted too! 'There is no strength nor power (25) save in God the Lofty, the Exalted!' Were I longer than the shadow of a lance, I should get shorter than a fly's neck! Indeed I have begun to disappear like a shadow, as the poet says,

p 80 > 'I worked[2] till the shadow began to grow after it had shortened till it almost dwindled away!'

Were I the longest of nouns, i.e the infinitive of a verb of six letters like *ihrinjām* or *istikhrāj*, and were I to lose one letter by each form of contraction, nothing would be left of me, or at any rate the utmost I could hope for would be to remain of two letters, one with a vowel and the other silent, which is the shortest possible vocable, no shorter one being possibly uttered And the poets would (5) take all sorts of liberties with me, and elide me in places where I had acknowledged rights. As Abu Du'ād says,

> 'Thinkest[3] thou every man a man, every fire that burns at night a fire?'

No! Complete annihilation were better than life after that style! Were I the seven-lettered word that forms the element of the Kāmil metre, and were then contracted in this way, I should probably get to be the letter which forms the (10) annex of the second hemistich of the seventh form of Kāmil If I were the

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[1] Sudaif was a poet who lived partly in the Umayyad, partly in the Abbasid period

[2] Kāmil I 221

[3] A verse cited in most of the grammars and books of rhetoric

seven-lettered foot of the Raml, and were treated so, the remainder of me would turn into the additional syllable of the fourth form, were I the five-lettered word of the Basīt metre, and treated thus, I should depart altogether, and not enough remain of me to form the additional syllable of the third form Suppose, however, I were a word of five letters and were contracted once and twice according to analogy, not by authority; and then a third time according to Al-Farrā and Al-Akhfash, but no other grammarians—after the third contraction the process (15) would have to stop, according to all systems, unless a quibbling pretext could be got from the fact recorded by Abu 'Ubaidah that certain of the Arabs say Wont you m? meaning Wont you move? answered by Yes, I'll m[1], meaning Yes, I'll move, a fact which is made to explain the Rejez verse,

'Umm 'Amr has promised to an—anoint my hair and take out the l, &c' (20)

Possibly you think that I have for my patronymic the preposition *'alā* in such a sentence as 'there is a debt upon Zaid,' were this so, I should necessarily be called *Abu 'Alā*, without the article, for such particles as this, when they are taken out of their natural functions, become definite, just as proper names are, like Zaid and 'Amr, unlike the letters of the alphabet, which, having no article in their ordinary usage, receive one when they leave it, so that we speak of *Al-Bā*, *Al-Tā*, *Al-Thā*, &c, when the article is wanting they are indefinite However (25) *'alā* and the like are different Nor do I refer to prepositions only, but all particles that give a sense, there is a verse ascribed to Abu Zubaid, p 81

'Would[2] I know, yet what use is "would that!" truly ohs and woulds are only trouble!'

And Al-Nābighah[3] says,

'Ah, would that I and he were dead, but "would that" is no remedy against (5) misfortune'

And Al-Namir[4],

'She stuck to an "if," which she kept on repeating, truly that "if" was too much for us'

Perhaps you might argue that the article had been prefixed to *'alā* in my supposed name as it is prefixed to 'Amr in the verse of Abu 'l-Najm[5],

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[1] Specimens of this style of contraction are given by Sībawaihi II 57, Kāmil I 245

[2] Aghāni IV 184

[3] Some of these lines are quoted by Sībawaihi II 30 [4] Aghāni XIX 158

[5] Quoted in the grammars, e g Mufassal, sect 12, as well as the next but one following of which the author was Ibn Mayyādah The quotations are in both cases inaccurate For the next see 'Aini I 498

(10) 'He delivered the mother of Al-'Amr from her captive,'

or as it was prefixed to *aubar* (mushroom) in the verse,

'I have plucked for thee truffles and mushrooms, and forbidden thee the daughters of Al-Aubar,'

or as another writer says,

'We have found Al-Yazīd son of Al-Walīd a blessed man whose shoulder is fitted for the burden of the Caliphate'

(15) The true forms being in all these cases Mother of 'Amr, Yazīd son of Al-Walīd, and Ibn Aubar (a form of mushroom) Abu Hātim quotes after Al-Asma'i,

'Fruits of earth such as shepherds bring, Ibn Aubar, truffles, and mushrooms.'

These however are all due to the exigencies of the verse. And it is supposed in the case of Al-Yazīd, where either form would suit the metre, that the poet made bold to prefix the article owing to its being prefixed to Walīd, where it is constant If however your idea was that I take my name from the third person (20) singular of the verb *'alā* (to mount), neither has this any more right to the article than the other You must have heard the verse of Kulākh[1],

'I'm Kulākh son of Kulākh, son of "Clear away," father of mischiefs, leader of a camel,'

and that of Suhaim son of Wathīl Al-Riyāhī[2],

(25) 'I am the son of "Clear away," and climber of the heights, when I put off my turban you will know me'

Nor can any argument be got from the verse of Farazdak to show that the article may be used with the finite verb,

p 82 'Thou art not the arbiter whose (lit the will be acquiesced in) judgement will be acquiesced in, nor of ancient stock, nor of intellect and firmness,'

any more than from the verse of Tārik son of Darsak[3],

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[1] Quoted in the notes on Hamāsah, p 465 The author has by error substituted Al-Kulākh for Al-Janāb as the name of the poet's father

[2] Quoted in the grammars, also in Al-Mubarrad's Kāmil I 224 (Eg)

[3] Quoted in the grammars, e g Ibn Ya'ish, p 460, Khizānat al-adab II 488, the preceding quotation is also a grammatical commonplace, see Khiz Ad I 14 The second of these quotations was probably got by Abu 'l-'Alā out of the Nawādir of Abu Zaid, where it is given (p 66) in

> 'And he brings the jerboa out of its hole, and out of its house Dhu 'l-Shaikhah "entrenches himself"'

For some persons regard these verses as spurious, while those who think them genuine regard them as cases of metrical necessity

Or perhaps you may suppose that my name follows the principle by which grammarians explain *du'il*, the 'stoat,' for *fu'il* is not enumerated by Sībawaihi (5) among triliteral forms of the noun, and as the word is nevertheless familiar, those who would account for it say that it is really the third person singular perfect passive of the verb *da'ala*, meaning 'to walk slowly,' 'to dally,' passive participle *mad'ūlun*, used of a place dallied in, they suppose this form *du'ila* is turned into a substantive, and then has the article prefixed, which is the same as the account given of a feminine ornament called *yanjalib*, which they say is the third person imperfect of the seventh form of *jalaba*, 'to attract,' meaning that with which (10) their husbands will be induced to do what they want. An Arab woman[1] is supposed to have said,

> 'I caught him with the *yanjalib,* he neither budged nor stirred away, nor did he loiter by the cords.'

This is indeed a rare usage, but I am quite willing to accept such an explanation in order to give censure no ladder with which to reach your generosity, and tittle-tattle no access to your munificence, especially as you have been excessive in your praise of me, and assigned me attributes which my station does not merit

You have doubtless met with the tradition[2] how the Caliph Omar went out (15) one night walking with his hand on Ibn 'Abbās's shoulder, and bade him recite a verse by the greatest of the poets; Ibn 'Abbās said to him, 'Who is that?' He answered, 'The poet who does not make one verse run into another[3], nor employ obsolete phrases, nor praise a man for qualities which he does not possess' He meant Zuhair son of Abu Sulma Now you, my friend, have aspired to two of these qualifications, for you have not let your verses run into one another, nor have you employed obsolete phrases, but you have praised me for qualities which I do not possess In this indeed you have only followed the (20) ordinary custom of orators and poets, as indeed the author of the 'Manṭik[4]' in the

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a poem ascribed to a poet of the pre-Islamic time, called Dhu 'l-Khirak Al-Tuhawi Tārik is mentioned in the poem, whence the author's mistake Both the reading and interpretation of Dhu 'l-Shaikhah are doubtful

[1] In T A the poetess is further specialized as Al-'Amiriyyah, but the readings seem to have varied

[2] Aghāni IX 147, Zahr al-Ādāb II 51

[3] Variously interpreted, cf Aghāni l c.

[4] Probably Ibn Al-Sikkit

second of his four books maintains that mendacity is not objectionable in poetry and oratory, and in consequence of this the Arabs have taken a licence to exaggerate and overstate in their descriptions. A poet describing a sword says,

'Its blows seem always to miss the mark till a victim comes in its way'

(25) And Al-Namir son of Taulab[1] says,

p. 83 'Events have left what they have of Namir—the furniture of an ancient sword whose traces are conspicuous; if you strike with it, it takes you all day to search for it, beyond the arms, the neck, and the sides.'

In your letter too you complain of shivering, and I know not what cause can have produced it, unless it be overstudy, a poet says,

(5) 'Constant wine-drinking has made me tremble, so that I have become unsteady, not from old age'

For you are living the most comfortable of lives without jars, no literary plan of yours ever fails, nor does any front tooth fall out On the contrary, you are like Abu Laila[2], the Nābighah of the Banu Ja'dah, who says,

'If any one ask concerning me, tell him that I am in the halcyon time of (10) life; a hundred and twelve years are passed since the year when I was born, and the vicissitudes of time have spared me as they would spare a sword of Yemen make'

I observe too that in your letter you find fault with travelling, or at least do so obliquely. Why so? Ought not a man to be satisfied with following the precedent set by Moses, 'who[3], when he turned towards Midyan, said, "Maybe my Lord will guide me?"' Have you forgotten your entering the mosques at (15) times of prayer, and your reaching the cities after the deserts? Do not you remember the verse quoted in the Majāz of Abu 'Ubaidah[4],

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[1] The verses are quoted in the Aghāni XIX 162, with, as usual, several variations They are quoted a propos of an old sword of such keenness that when a man hamstrung a camel with it he not only cut through all four joints at one blow, but plunged the sword so deep in the earth as well that he had to dig away the earth round it for fear of breaking it if he tried to pull it out The author's quotation can scarcely therefore come from the Aghāni, since, according to that work, the description given in the verses was not an exaggeration

[2] These verses are given in Agh IV 129, 130 The quotation is inaccurate Nābighah of Ja'dah was a poet who is supposed to have lived both before and during Islam, and to have reached a fabulous age, at his death he was according to some authorities 180, according to others 220 years old At the age of 100 not one of his teeth was broken according to one of the authorities in the Aghāni, this being due to the Prophet's blessing The text alludes to this

[3] Koran XXVIII 21

[4] Famous grammarian of the time of Harun Al-Rashid His life is given by Ibn Khallikan II

'O blessed night and peaceful time, and paths like the seamless texture of the weaver!'

a verse which pleased you so much that you encouraged the persons present to start on their travels, and to camp on the open ground? Travelling is the best expedient for difficulties, and many a time has a traveller some morning found himself near the accomplishment of his purpose You especially ought not to say this, who, besides attaining your ends, have made the acquaintance of the (20) learned men in the several capitals, and disputed with the subtlest thinkers in original inquiries You who have had the Pointers for your nightly companions, and passed 'porcupine's nights[1],' have you no yearning after the plodding of the weary beast, and the camel-driver's yodeling?—behind camels like those of the stars, whose eyes never tire of running, whose shoes are wet with blood, and with whose natures the *dhamīl*[2] is intimately linked, looking at the beasts out of eyes like shallow wells, and whose saddles might be hard ground, Dhu (25) 'l-Rummah says[3],

'After two nights without water they still outstrip the humming driver, when p 84 we lead them with *hīd, hīd*, they strike their shoulder-tips with their cheeks And youths with nodding heads like drunken men, who are satisfied with dividing the inclinations, and rubbing their hands on the earth's surface'

I can well remember your admiring this poem, and reciting the following lines (5) of it,

'The sister of the Banu Labīd scorns the others, and admires Mas'ūd and me, she sees that we are the boys for a long journey, who clothe ourselves in black night as others clothe themselves in a steel cuirass'

This being so, ought not your saddle to be upon a thin and wiry beast which knows no night-companions but the drivers, which plunges into the mirage like a fish, and glances with a madman's eyes, which has never given suck to a foal, (10)

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128 His name was Ma'mar Ibn Al-Muthanna The work mentioned in the text, according to Ibn Khallikan, was an account of the metaphors and similes in the Koran The work was attacked by Abu 'Ubaidah's rival Al-Asma'i for innovation

[1] The porcupine is supposed not to sleep at night, hence there are several proverbs which allude to this fact, the present one is given by Maydāni I 148

[2] A mode of motion

[3] A part of this Rejez poem is given in the Aghāni XVI 114, but none of this first passage, in the second part Abu 'l-'Alā's quotation would seem to be more than ordinarily inaccurate

and to which the slaves have never shouted *bass* at morning or evening: but is rather as Al-A'sha says[1],

> 'Of the best of camels rendered hardy by dough, by feeding at the frontiers, and by long sterility?'

While the foam is flowing she might seem a male ostrich that had got loose, the bones behind her ears give forth pitch, and she never rests her fore-neck on the ground. She might in very truth be an ass that has got all its teeth, one year or two, that has been at large in pasture after pasture, and come down to the (15) lowlands after the highlands, followed by seven or eight females, an *Akhdarī*[2] in descent, and a native of Yemen. Sitting in the saddle of such a beast you should chant the verses of Shammākh[3]:

> ''Tis as though my packsaddles were on the back of a wild ass chased since a year, tanned by competing with the dry-uddered camels
>
> Whose time of thirst was passed in midsummer after the Goats had sojourned in the domain of the Dogs,
>
> (20) Which spent the day in Ubli, with eyes like used-up wells looking to the sun to see whether it would approach.
>
> Fine creatures, wiry, like lances aimed by some marksman at the air.'

The midday heat has milked them behind the ears, for no relics of milk will be found in the udders. 'Vain[4] indeed are the promises that are made you!' And a plague on Ma'kil[5] son of Dirār when he says,

> 'Her arms are like those of a pert woman, who, after scolding, would fain (25) defend herself; behind her ears there might seem to be kerchiefs, that had left the hands of men who had been squeezing turpentine. And when she passes by the waters of 'Udhaib[6], her eye is like a hole in a rock, no circle round it can be seen.'

p 85 She dips her beak at one time into sweet water, at another into salt, and passes the night without supper; she comes suddenly upon the *kata* in its hummings, and labours hard as usual; she is as it were the leader of the camels, having upon her a bridle of toil and fatigue.

> 'There they cross our path while the gravel is burning, the wind at rest, and

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[1] Verse of A'sha of Bakr, Jamharah, p 57. Several words in the line are variously interpreted, e g for 'dough' some render 'date-stones'.

[2] See supra, p 14, n 5.

[3] Jamharah, p 154 (all but the last verse).

[4] Koran XXIII 38.

[5] Name of Al-Shammākh. See Kāmil II 74.

[6] Supra, p 41, n 7.

the shadows erect, following a camel with upturned eyes which you (5)
would think mad or seeing what camels do not see'

When the shadow becomes a sock or shoe, she outdoes the racing camels both in trot and gallop·

'She came lifting high her neck in the first drove, while the shadow did not rise above her hoof.'

She gives no trouble to a driver, and fears no impeding weariness.

'When the beasts weary their drover, and their hoofs are riding their necks.'

She and her companions are like castles, and her sea is filled with her quick pace She (10) gallops all day and all night, so that she is like the camel of the sons of Suhail

''Tis[1] as though she had a stuffed calf on the saddle of her rider, and it is her fashion to wear herself out.'

She asks the camels with her eyes, Are ye all sprung from a slow creature? But indeed they had been good at travelling till fatigue wore them out·

'Weariness fettered them ne'er fettered before, their necks being erect like (15) a spear stuck in the ground.'

'They used to be fettered when they passed by a dwelling And now weariness serves for them in fetters' stead'

And you, while riding such a mount, would see some shy gazelle or buffalo mingling with the herd, or female ostrich with eggs deposited in the sand, fancying the colocynth a protection against the snakes, and would look at the chameleon wriggling on its branch, while you were conspicuous on the back of your docile beast, hearing the songs of the cicadas, and well pleased by the grasshopper, and the gazelles gleaming like shells, and all of them longing for the (20) shade of Samurah bushes, so that it might be the wilderness of Dhu 'l-Rummah

''Tis as if its shrubs, while the sun is in its midday heat, were shells single and strung strewed about it

The spotted, black-backed animal brays there at midday as though he were a strung lute

A tambour whose notes are accompanied by a drunken man in whose accent there is a deflexion from Arabic intonation

It rides over the hot sand trampling upon it, while the sun, as if bewildered, (25) loiters in the air His feet might seem to be those of a hasty runner, whose garments rustle as he passes.'

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[1] Hamāsah, p 153

p 86 Till you came down to a well of stale water, dug by the hyenas and about to fall in, such as when the drawer tastes it, he spits it out, the sun having sunk or being about to sink—or to some foul rain-puddle, which the showers have rendered turbid and swollen, whereat the herds gather, and truly it is a vile drink, being as the brother of the *Banu Numair* says [1],

'And water compared with which the wells are like wine of Burāk, and which has turned worse than stale. Whereof I stirred the depths and (5) scared away from it companions that had ensconced themselves therein, —into a traveller's table-cover and its tags I gathered them all weak and strong.'

Or it may be that your saddle should be on the back of a big-cheeked miscarrier, that hurries like a hopping ostrich, fearing not the attack of weariness, and not guilty of slackness at midday [2],

'Making no noise when the sun is at its hottest—the best of some silent drove'

(10) As though she were a spotted wild cow brought out by the evening to feed, with her a dusky calf, into pasture land as fragrant as musk, when some mischievous wolf is set on him, who waits for the moment when she is not looking, and when occupied with some sweet pasture such as will fill her udders with milk, she thinks distractedly of her calf, and how her only one is in a wilderness, and, hastening to look for her soul's own brother, she finds he has become a mere name like yesterday, and finds nothing but head and shins, and a hide that the robber prince (15) has left over She it is that is meant in the verses of Katāmī [3],

'The wooden frame of my saddle when it enclosed dry udder-veins and hungry entrails might have been upon a wild cow, which went off at a flying pace, having to provide for a calf which got lost, and coming to him after her return, she finds the wild beast at his lair; they had made sport of him, and left nothing save a torn hide or a shin-bone'

(20) Or you might be upon a horse of A'waj lineage, one that will not readily stumble, with a body that might be made of gold, and hoofs of emerald, whose 'blaze' you would think a star of night, and his gallop the advance of a torrent

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[1] The first of these verses is cited by Yākūt as by Al-Akhtal, whence Mr Salhani has printed it among that author's fragments, but there seems no ground for styling Al-Akhtal a brother of the Banu Numair Probably this time Abu 'l-'Alā is right, and the verses belong to some Numairī poet, e g Al-Rā'ī, to whom Al-Bekri I. 165 assigns the first

[2] Quoted by Rāghib Al-Ispahāni, Muhādarāt II 386, from Al-A'sha

[3] The poem whence these lines probably come is quoted in the Aghāni XX 129

He does not compel his rider to say *hāb* and *hab*, but dashes on with fiery energy One that raises above him that reins him a neck tall as a palm-trunk, and rivals the north wind with his proud lineage, each time there comes in the way a wild herd or flock such a horse can set fetters on it He is always fresh victual for his riders; he is bound to sustain them while in the desert. He is the enemy of the wild ass whom his morning visits frighten, as though he were a kite swooping (25) from a high mountain, or glanced with the eyes of a hawk. He leaves the ostrich p. 87 behind as though it were an orphan chick. He is too haughty to pick his way cautiously over the stones The eyes of the enemy are intent upon his rider as upon a star in the heavens that shines to give them guidance. The points of the spears are not levelled at him, neither can he be reached save with the keenest gaze.

But if a horse failed you, then you might make your expedition upon a braying mule, a good beast to accomplish one's purposes, a cross between an ass and a horse of tough build like a coil of rope the sort of animal whereon to traverse (5) wide lands, and execute one's designs. Witness the verse of Ibn Al-Rukayyāt,

> 'They took the bridle off the coursers and went off attaching them to braying mules,'

and of Ibn Mukbil [1],

> 'From the plain of Himyar where are the stalings of mules—how couldst thou climb all this distance at midnight?'

and that of the Asadite, (10)

> 'After Ghumdān [2] they passed a land wherein are pools of mules' stalings.'

Similar passages are very frequent, and so you whose fame is heaven-high might well be content to ride the 'thirsty beast' Many a good thing has been reached by the aid of the ass, and many a donkey-rider is better off than one mounted on a restive steed. God Almighty says [3], 'Look unto thy ass, and it is that we may make thee a sign unto mankind' Nor were it surprising if God were to strip off a man the apparel of the rich and put upon him that of the Prophets, in which case (15) he would rely for his journey on a mount of acacia-wood, such as neither grows weary nor gives cause for rebuke. A mount which when you rest in a place saves you the services of various people, since it needs neither water nor provender, and, if it perish, it can easily be replaced. A fine mount, indeed! God says [4], 'And what is that in thine hand, Moses? He answered, My staff whereon I lean, and wherewith I drive my flock, and it has other uses as well [5]'

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[1] Jamharah, p 160

[2] Name of a pre-Islamic fort in Yemen

[3] Koran II 261

[4] Koran XX 19

[5] The whole passage is a reminiscence of Jāhiz, Tibyān II 62 sq

(20) Now I have only eulogized travelling and afterwards described its inconveniences, because all great things have trouble connected with them, and the *khutbān*[1] is the plant which leads up to the honey. An ancient writer says,

> 'Think not glory a date which thou canst eat, thou shalt not attain to glory till thou have licked wormwood'

A long letter this! God make your life proportionately long! And prolixity is unlike the brave But now I am going to be brief and concise I have answered you in prose instead of verse only because I have for years abandoned (25) such frivolities Our friend Abu Hamzah[2] (on whom God have mercy!) has been transferred by God Almighty from the abode of woe to that of bliss and perpetuity, p 88 who has watered his grave till his body has become like food to the earth that swallowed it And I with my companions send you with every traveller on the highway, every wind that blows, every flash of lightning, every phantom that crosses the path, such salutations as will perfume the saddles of the caravan that (5) is entrusted with them, and gratify the hearts of men when their ears hear them.

LETTER XXVIII.

Answer to a letter addressed him by some one about a Kādi's assessor[3], *who had asked leave to be discharged from the duty of witness.*

The facts stated by you, dear sir, are a 'warning to him that has a heart, or hears being present[4]' However, 'the heart[5] of Khidāsh has no ears.' Now he has spoken correctly who has given good advice but 'what[6] is there to be done with a lad whose father was too much for me,' and who is a 'chip of the old block?' (10) The father of this man had abandoned the office of assessor at the end of his life, and 'happy[7] is he who takes warning by others.' Now I have tested this man's

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[1] The *khutbān* is said by the T A to be a plant resembling asparagus, with soft leaves somewhat the colour of the violet, and exceedingly bitter

[2] Bewailed in S Z I 208

[3] The assessors are persons who witness the contracts made between individuals 'They set their seal to these documents, and in case of litigation are bound to give evidence They have offices in all the large towns, where they interview the persons who desire to make a contract whether verbal or written In the latter case it is the assessor who draws up the deed' (Dozy).

[4] Koran L. 36 (cited inaccurately, perhaps purposely)

[5] The name of Khidāsh occurs twice in Maydāni's commentary on the proverbs, but not in such a way as to illustrate this saying, which would seem to mean 'none so blind as those who wont see.'

[6] Maydāni II. 109

[7] Maydāni I 289

character, and he was as timid as the 'antelope[1] that leaves its lair,' or the 'wild ass[2] who looks well after his hide.' ''Amr[3] has grown too old for the collar.'

> 'Truly a branch, if straightened out, will become straight, but a plank will not obey if you straighten it.'

He had borne the weight of the assessorship for forty years, had it been a shirt, (15) it would have got torn in those years, had it been a member of the body, it would have got worn out. Now 'well[4] begun is half done;' the Moslems are not likely to want men of pure and solid character—such, thank God, are plentiful in this city. And the assessorship is a duty binding on the community at large. And as for exposing the young to this hardship,—'the[5] dead man's family have the best right to vengeance,' and 'give[6] the hot to him who has had the cold,' and 'the[7] opinion of an old man is better than the witness of a young one.' And this is not p 89 a money-earning trade, the loss of which might be to be apprehended, nor a bride sought in marriage whose death might be feared, any honest and worthy man can serve as credible witness. and if you desire one of your friends to have this post, why do you not undertake it yourself, and throw for it your luckiest arrow? The author of the work called 'The Leaf' mentions a number of poets whose testimony was received by the judges; among them Al-Sayyid[8] Al-Himyari, albeit at (5)

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[1] Maydāni I 101

[2] Maydāni II 9

[3] A favourite proverb with Spanish authors, see Dozy's quotations. In Maydāni II 108, the first word of the proverb is *kabura*. The story of the 'Amr to whom this proverb is supposed to allude is told below in Letter XXX (p. 117). The golden collar which he had worn when a child was found too small for him when he returned from his wandering.

[4] Maydāni I 192

[5] Maydāni I 35

[6] Maydāni II 326. The proverb seems to mean, let those pay the penalty who have enjoyed the pleasure.

[7] Maydāni II 297

[8] His name was Ismā'īl Ibn Muhammad, a long account of him is given in the Aghāni at the commencement of vol VII. The Kaysani sect are reckoned by Shahrastani (p 109, ed Cureton) among the Murjites, their chief tenet would seem to have been belief in the Imamate or sovereignty of Mohammad son of Al-Hanafiyyah, who was supposed to be the hidden Mahdi who would finally appear. Al-Sayyid flourished at the end of the Umayyad and the commencement of the Abbasid period, and was reckoned as one of the three most voluminous authors of Arabic verse, but owing to his unorthodox opinions few cared to recite his verses. Besides being unorthodox in his opinions he was notorious as a drinker of wine, and according to an authority cited in the Aghāni kicked a man overboard for differing from him in opinion, it is therefore strange that such a man should have been appointed to a post where a good character was essential, and according to the Aghāni (p 14) his evidence was refused by a Kādi named Sawwar, who thereby exposed himself to Al-Sayyid's satire. As the Caliph Al-Mansur forbad Sawwar to take measures against Al-Sayyid, on another occasion when Al-Sayyid offered his evidence, Sawwar refused to give judgement.

that time he was accused of belonging to the Kaysanite sect, and was accordingly in disfavour.

Every capital has in it persons of this character: among our own contemporaries I may mention Abu 'Abdallah[1] Al-Namiri of Basrah, whose evidence was received by the Kādi in Basrah, he being one of the poets of that city. And if you are so generous to the mob of the Moslems, what say you to the people of your (10) own profession? Methinks I see you wailing to this day over the death of the father of Imru 'ul-Kais[2], out of your extreme attachment to the Kindite bard! How big a fine would you not pay to the poor if only it could be shown that Al-Ḥārith Al-Yashkuri[3] had not written the verse in which Māu 'l-Samā is mentioned in his poem with the rhyming word in the nominative? With how many *dīnārs* would you not redeem the false rhyme in Al-Nābighah's poem[4], and the censure which he in consequence incurred from the people of Medinah? How many hundreds would you not give to buy Al-Buhturī[5] a pair of handsome feet, —for it is said that he had peacocks' feet? How many a pilgrimage would you (15) not have made to the Ka'bah to pray God to increase the height of Farazdaḳ the son of Ghālib by one span—for he was dwarfish? What would you not have given to preserve to A'sha of Ḳais a little of his eyesight to find his way with? I can see you grieving over the one-eyedness of Ibn Ahmar, Al-Shammākh, and Al-Rā'ī Al-Numairī[6]. And if this be your way with men of a different age and religion from your own, what are you like to the people of your own time? You are to them like a mother 'who[7] lays a bed and puts an infant to sleep.' Methinks

[1] Verses of this poet are cited in Tha'ālibi's Yatīmat al-Dahr, ed. Damascus II. 126. Tha'ālibi was in personal communication with him, and calls him one of the most eminent scholars of his time.

[2] The account of his death is given in the Aghāni VIII. 62. His name was Hujr, and he is said to have been killed by 'Ilbah Ibn Al-Hārith Al-Kāhili after having taken bloody vengeance on the Asadites for refusing him tribute. The traditions varied as to the exact mode of his death.

[3] The poem is the Mu'allakah of Hārith; see the account of it in Aghāni IX. 180, 181. The verse in which Māu 'l-Samā is mentioned is the following: 'And we loosed the bonds of Imru 'ul-Kais off him after he had been long bound in prison.' Imru 'ul-Kais meaning here Māu 'l-Samā son of Al-Mundhir. It refers to a victory of the tribe Bakr over the Hujr mentioned in the last note.

[4] This story is told in Aghāni IX. 164. In the first version of a poem rhyming in *d*, Nābighah of Dhubyān made *aswadu* end the second line, whereas all the rest ended in *adi*. When he came to Medinah the people were too courteous to tell him that he had made a mistake, and so put on a professional singer to perform the piece. Nābighah hearing the false rhyme altered the verse in which it occurred.

[5] This fact does not seem to be mentioned in the account of Al-Buhturī given in the Aghāni and by Ibn Khallikan.

[6] Kāmil I. 24.

[7] Maydāni I. 22.

I see one of them standing before the great Sultan, and you palpitating with fear lest he should commit himself. And yet who is more likely to be generous than (20) he? God bring you to the longest age that poet ever enjoyed, with health like that of the wild beast that is at large in the desert, and sight like that of the raven; and hearing like that of the horse, and preserve you from all the accidents that befall the aged. For not unfrequently they make faulty verses without knowing it. I myself met a man of this sort who nevertheless knew the story of Buhturī making the following faulty verse,

> 'Why[1] should the soul seek for a thing whereof God has made Paradise the (25) substitute?'

And if your feelings towards stranger contemporaries are so warm, what must they be to the poets of your own city? They are like your brothers and cousins! p. 90 And the case is just the contrary of what the Asadite says[2],

> 'By your life if I were to bring an action against a snake before Fak'as, Fak'as would give it against me'

And praise be to God who has made you the contrary of what Al-Mutalammis says,

> 'O Hārith[3], if our blood were to be mixed, the drops would separate, and not (5) touch each other'

And I am astonished, I assure you, at the excellence of your advice and the grand way in which you control your language, but, as the proverb says, 'The tools to him that can handle them.' The archer has now got the shooting I only say this because several poets had no skill in prose composition—indeed it is said that Buhturī could not write a letter without dropping off into verse Thank God for having bestowed on you the power of writing both prose and verse; both of them (10) are like pearls, we can almost hear their water trickling

LETTER XXIX

p 91

Part of a letter

Al-Hutay'ah[4] said,

> 'I wander about and then return to a house inhabited by a slut'

Now the house of my correspondent's friend is free from women both clever and stupid, and I have only prefixed this verse by way of excuse for my neglect, for

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[1] Ed Const II 29, the quotation is inaccurate

[2] Quoted by Jāhiz, Tibyān I. 207 Fak'as is a tribal name.

[3] The verses of Al-Mutalammis are collected in the *Christian Arabic Poets,* see I 337

[4] This poet's satire on his mother and wife was proverbial This verse is quoted by Al-Mubarrad, Kāmil I 153, 353

(5) wherever I turn I find myself swimming in your favours. Now the Syrians are to the people of 'Irāk like half-breds to thorough-breds, or domestic cattle to wild cattle, and fruit excels fruit just as man excels man We read in the Koran, 'And of what we have bestowed on them they spend.' And the Prophet said, 'Were[1] I invited to partake of a *mirmāt*, I should accept,' a *mirmāt* being an excrescence in the hoof of a sheep. The Arabic proverb says, 'A man is like part of his clothes,' and were I to present you with the sky, the Pleiads, and (10) flowery spring with its perfume, I should still think I had fallen short of my duty. Now in this country there is a bad kind of pistachio, called 'the neighbours' annoyance,' the meaning of this designation being that when it is cracked its evilly-disposed neighbours suppose that it is full and are envious of it, when, though they do not know, it is empty. Now I have sent some of it for your attendants to amuse themselves with. I should never have ventured to do this, did I not know the amiability of your character, it is only right, however, that you should treat me with your ordinary generosity

p 92

LETTER XXX[2].

Letter of consolation, written to one of his friends (really his uncle Abu 'l-Kāsim *son of* Sabīkah*) on the death of his brother* Abū Bakr, *who died in Damascus*

You (God bless you!) are like a sword of Yemen, not worn out by the passing time, and a lofty star, safe from all wrong actions; you are like wine, which, the older it gets, the better and more fragrant it becomes Has the sun's skin ever (5) got tanned, or does it suffer by its light being old? Have the passing years robbed Rahwah[3] of its stability, or Sahwah[4] of its durability? Were my letters to you in proportion to my feelings, I should despatch one to you every hour, with some message to do duty in my stead I should have described the anguish that I feel, which memory constantly makes stronger And indeed many a secret question reveals an excessive longing. God maintain His favour towards us, and keep it whether His decrees please or pain us Fate is imperious and dominant; (10) and God forbid that we should say as Al-Muhāribi[5] said,

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[1] Muwatta (Zurkāni) I 240

[2] This letter, the longest of the collection, must be judged in accordance with Oriental ideas of taste

[3] Rahwah seems to mean a hill, but in Yākūt's notes on this word great uncertainty is displayed as to the particular hill to which this name was given

[4] A rock in the Tā'ī dialect Yākūt merely knows that Sahwah was the name of a place

[5] Famous poets of the Muhārib were Khirāsh, Al-Hakam Ibn Manī', and Al-Bakī' Ibn Saffār In the Kāmil of Mubarrad II 314 a line of Hassān Ibn Thābit is quoted in which the throne of God is said to have shaken at the death of Sa'd Ibn Mu'ādh

'The throne of God all glorious shook at the death of my uncle, the day my uncle died.'

No! 'We are God's, and to God do we return!' All that are on the earth shall perish, and man is but a dissolving view and God bless Abu Khirāsh[1] for saying,

'Knowest thou not that before us the true friends Mālik and 'Akīl had to part?'

And man lives ever in hope which flees far from him; everything he has is a loan (15) even to his brother An ancient writer says[2],

'Everything down to thy brother is "furniture," and fate rules both separation and gathering'

O thou that grievest and art sore distressed! Others than thou have dead friends who are as it were asleep Despair will bring nothing back, neither will grief bring him to life whom the sword of fate has once slain!

'Their grief[3] avails not the daughters of Rib', they sleep not, yet the sleeper feels no pain!'

If the vicissitudes of time have dealt foully by our good friend Abu Bakr, are we P 93 not familiar with the treason and falseness of fate?

'Men's goods are but luxury, and a man's life is a garment that is borrowed'

Each of us in this transitory life is like a captive at large, yet fettered, he ceases not to move even though he fancy that he is at rest

'Truly[4] there is a time for resting and a time for travelling, and a time for the traveller to linger God has claimed for Himself justice and faith- (5) fulness, and assigned the blame to man.'

Were the world a bride, she would have been divorced, but rather she is a mother who has nursed, and whom her children love in spite of unkindness, and albeit she defrauds them of their rights What have we to do with thee, O earth? Thou art not satisfied with the loss of chattels 'Thou didst displease me when thy teeth were white, how much more now when thou art toothless?' I cared not for thee when thou wast in the bloom of thy youth, how much less now when thou art a withered hag! But alas, it is not thou that becomest old or tired, but thy

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[1] Hudhalite poet, the verse is often quoted, e g Aghāni XIV 73, the story of these persons is told later on in the letter

[2] Cf Aghāni IX 4

[3] Verse of 'Abd Manāf Ibn Rib' in Wellhausen's *Skizzen*, p 3, Kāmil II 284

[4] Aghāni VII 85 Verses of A'sha of Kais, they were quoted to prove that the author was a Kadari, i e a believer in free will

(10) children that have drunk out of thy vessel. Thy sun still rises and sets! Thy mountains still raise their necks; thy plants return each year to provide food for men and cattle, on thee neither king nor poor man is safe. What could 'Urwah[1] of the poor or Ibn Jabalah[2] the rich do unto thee? If grief could be weighed, then if my grief were set against Thabīr, it would outweigh it[3], even as a stallion outweighs a blade of grass. So I began to think of all those whom the 'two lads' (day and night) have carried off, and I found that all these men became dust and ashes even as the branches of a tree become coals and cinders.

(15) ADAM died after that he had seen Paradise and inhabited it, and been asked by the angels the secrets of the names and divulged them, after he had gone out into the world and become miserable, and experienced its misery, and been bereaved of Abel, till he nearly went mad with grief. So that his death (God have mercy on him!) was a warning to all his descendants that there is no way to secure perpetuity.

NOAH was taken, he who preached to the worshippers of Nasr[4], and put together the ship with nails, wherein he escaped drowning. He who carried Adam after the stitching of the leaves in planks that had been nailed together, for fear (20) lest all trace of his buried limbs should be effaced by the water, when the heavens poured it so freely. He too did not live for ever, though revelation came to him from on high, and as legend records, he blessed the dove, and it was adorned with the ring.

After him was the Prophet of 'Ād, to whom the wind by God's command was made subservient, and whose people were overtaken by punishment, truly no light one. He too was overtaken beyond a doubt by what overtook the people of 'Itr[5], and the destroyer made them equal, except that this one was taken in innocence,

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[1] An account of him is given in Aghāni II 190. His name was 'Urwah Ibn Al-Waid, and he was one of the pre-Islamic poets and heroes, he got the name of 'Urwah of the poor because he collected them round him and maintained them, according to one authority, whereas others gave another account of the appellation.

[2] Perhaps the author should have said Jabalah, the Ghassānid who became a Moslem in Omar's time, but afterwards went to Constantinople and became a Christian, whose story is told in the Aghāni XIV 2–8, with an account of his great wealth.

[3] A commonplace, see Aghāni VI 10.

[4] Name of an idol. Mohammedan writers are accustomed to attribute to all idolaters the worship of the idols known to them from the pre-Islamic history.

[5] 'Itr was the name of the father of Kail, chief of the envoys to Meccah mentioned in the following note. When asked to choose for himself, the fate he chose was that he might suffer the same as befell his tribe. When told it was destruction, he said it made no difference. Tabari I 241.

while they were taken in guilt and rebellion. He forgot what the two Jarādahs[1] had sung to him, and was given a storm, no summer shower. (25)

After him another Prophet[2], for whom the camel with the foal was created[3], and who gallopped on in his piety like a horse. On him came an unlooked-for fate, which made him in rank no better than the followers of Kudār[4]. Save that their final end was different,—he going to Paradise, and they to Hell p 94

Next the man who came safe out of the blazing fire, who felt no pain from its heat, except that death made him and Nimrūd equals. God protect us from attending concerts and music[5]!

Then the 'man of the cloud[6]' was noble and renowned, yet he lay down in the grave, and did not budge

Then the man who saw the light and thought it a fire—who made the night-journey, and removed disgrace from the Children of Israel—albeit he hated and abhorred death[7], yet he could not exceed the term that had been fixed for him— (5) fixed by him who neither errs nor fails, who is far beyond and above all evil

Then the author of the Psalter, who was honoured both in his youth and age. who imitated in his Psalter the voices of the birds, who held with the right and the good

Then SOLOMON, who combined sovereignty with the prophetic office—still even that did not rescue him from death.

Then the man who was supposed to keep back the sun, he too set and abode in the grave

Then the SON of MARY, whom many worship, and the day of whose coming is expected—still even he left his Mother, and could not escape the reprobation of many tribes

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[1] The two Jarādahs were singing-women supposed to have performed at Meccah in the time of the Prophet Hūd In Tabari I 233 we read that certain envoys of the tribe of 'Ād were entertained in Meccah by Bakr Ibn Mu'āwiyah, who gave them wine to drink, and made the Jarādahs play to them. The verses of the Jarādahs recorded ibid p 236 were to warn these envoys that they were staying too long It does not appear however from Tabari that Hūd himself had any opportunity of hearing these singers See also Aghāni VIII 2

[2] Sālih [3] Koran VII 71

[4] The name of the 'Wretch' of Thamūd who slaughtered the sacred camel (Not in Tabari)

[5] These words seem to be the correct rendering of the original, but have very little point here

[6] Shu'aib, or Jethro The word rendered 'cloud' is interpreted in various ways The story is told in Koran XXVI 185

[7] Allusion to a tradition in Tabari I 503, that Moses was unwilling to die, and that in order to make him prefer death to life the Deity took away the prophetic power from him and gave it to Joshua

(10) Then MOHAMMED, who strove to serve his Lord, and won victories for God's people and his allies. He too lay down in the grave, though the most honourably escorted of the people. And if this be the case with the blessed Prophets, what think ye of the wretched and miserable? Even so unto kings do fate's messengers pay visits. Such of the Arabs as have reigned have not escaped death by the furthest flight Saba son of Yashjub had the veil fall over him,—he was the first, according to the legend, who took captives, and he was named[1] thereafter, the last letter being turned into a consonant, being made a *hamzah* against analogy As when you say, 'I have sweetened the polenta,' substituting *halla'tu* for *hallaytu* (15) He passed on a foray by the sacred territory, and found there no opponent And seeing its inhabitants in great poverty before the time of Al-Nadi[2] son of Kinānah, father of Kuraish, he asked them why they stayed in so wild a country, and were so greatly attached thereunto. And they answered that that land had a God who fed its people, and who let no one perish who attached himself to Him. Praise, said they, to God the exalted, who feeds both those who dwell in sacred territory and profane, and him who basks in the sun and him who loves the shade Then (20) what they said stuck in the king's mind, and he perceived that they were not to be gained over, and he hid himself three days to ponder on the divine government, and on the third he said, after a long silence, 'I see nothing in the sky more luminous than the sun,' and so he prepared to worship it, and bade his followers and troops to do the like And he only did this in order to please God most High, who has no known rival, and whom no foe ventures to oppose And[3] when he bethought him of going down to the watering-place of the dead, he handed over to Kahlān a protecting shield, and to Himyar a piercing sword. And (25) those of the ministers who were present said, 'He has assigned to Himyar the sovereignty and the throne, and to Kahlān the administration of the government' Then Himyar remained king until the Eternal decreed his death, and God only p 95 endures without change, He who creates men with gentleness and ease 'There endureth nothing save the face of thy great Lord' Now the chroniclers mention no king of the sons of Himyar until fifteen generations had passed[4], who wasted

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[1] The same etymology is given by Hamzah Al-Ispahāni, p 124, who however declares that he will not be responsible for it, by others, e g Ibn Ishāk and Mas'ūdi, without any objection

[2] The name Kuraish is said to be derived from a root signifying trade, and Al-Nadr is supposed by trading to have become wealthy This is the account given of the name by Ibn Ishāk, p 60, who would seem to identify Al-Nadr with Kuraish

[3] Not in the ordinary histories

[4] The ordinary chronology makes Al-Rā'ish succeed Kahlān immediately or after one intervening reign (Tabari, Mas'udi, Hamzah) These chronicles however make no claim to any exact information. The author's statement resembles Ibn Kutaibah's (p 209)

whole ages over their sovereignty, without making forays into other people's territory, living and dying. Until at last there arose Al-Hārith, called Al-Rā'ish, who made raids upon the surrounding enemies, and clad himself in an honourable (5) robe of fine deeds. He was called Al-Rā'ish (the featherer) because he took captive whole families, and made much booty. Whereby he 'feathered' the inhabitants of Yemen, this being in his early time; then one of God's messengers summoned him, and his kingdom became like a deceptive mirage. Then in the time of Al-Rā'ish perished Lokmān[1], he of the vultures, after drinking the last dregs of life; for indeed God has chosen for Himself perpetuity[2], and has decreed that there shall be no escape. Then after Al-Rā'ish arose his son Abrahah[3], who endured for a period; he brought no reproach upon his people, and was called in his lifetime the man of the Lighthouses, because whenever he raided the enemy, (10) he set up lights on the way, so that when his army wished to return they were safe against losing their way. This did he until his life came to an end, when he resigned his kingdom, and took up his abode in a hollow of the earth. The living then forgot him, and his friends parted from him after they had benefited by his gifts, and obtained captive maidens from his spoils. 'The life of this world is but a deceptive ware,' and God is exalted in power; He has left none, just or unjust, whom He has not made to swallow the cup of death, even though during his (15) lifetime he accomplished his desire. Then rose after Abrahah Ifrīkis, who invaded the West, and travelled over the mainland and took the Berbers out of Syria[4], and settled them where they now are; they being the remnant of those whom Joshua the son of Nun slew, who dwelt in Ramlah and the neighbourhood. He built Ifrīkiyyah[5], which was named after him; and his arrows, when he shot them, went straight to the mark; but then Sha'ūb[6] took him down, and the joints of his shafts became loosened. Meeting with a reverse of fortune, he lay him down in a grave. 'Verily God encompasseth them.' After him rose his brother 'Abd Ibn Abrahah, (20) who took the Nasnās[7], and frightened his people when he brought them home. For their frames were not like men's frames, even as the histories tell. For this

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[1] Ṭabari makes him a son of 'Ād of 'Itr (see p. 106, n. 5). His life according to the legend was 560 years.

[2] In the list of things the envoys were allowed to wish for perpetuity was expressly excluded.

[3] Tabari I. 441. If the name, which occurs in a verse of Imru 'ul-Kais, is correctly reported, it is more probable that Manār was the name of a place.

[4] Tabari I. 564.

[5] The early Arabian historians thought Africa the name of a city; hence Yāḳūt has to explain that when this city was destroyed its name was inherited by the surrounding region.

[6] The Arabic death-god. [7] Tabari I. 441.

reason he was called 'the man of terrors.' Then, overcome by palsy, he left the borrowed throne, being robbed by an emissary of fate. He turned into a mere name and a tradition, and, after gathering many a host of men, both king and host perished, and the same lot befell them as befell Thamūd 'There is no God but God,' He destroys the nations, but persists Himself, and His slaves cannot turn (25) fugitives. Then there rose after 'the man of terrors,' Haddād[1] son of Sharahbīl son of 'Amr son of Al-Rā'ish, who, after a little, was 'shaken,' and his kingdom was not lengthened, but shortened He, it is said, was the father of Bilkīs, and to her reverted his throne when he was summoned, and when the time of his destruction p. 96 came Then came the period of Solomon, and when his death was proclaimed—against which there is no insurance that can be given to true man or false—Bilkīs survived for a period, and then went off fast to the next world. 'Praise to God all-powerful!' All men perish, and none returns! Then reigned Yāsir[2] son of 'Amr son of Ya'fur, and none had any quarrel with him, for he was called Yāsir of favours[3], as having restored the kingdom after it had been taken away, thereby (5) conferring a mighty favour For it had gone out of their hands, and no allies were left them. Thus the power had come into the hands of Solomon. Yāsir invaded the West, and armies were gathered unto him, and he came forth with a host numerous as the ants, till he reached the valley of sand, and he despatched a force which perished, no one ever going the same way again. And he ordered an image of brass, whereon Dhū Nuhās[4] wrote in Himyari characters *there is no path for any one beyond* And he set up that image as an ensign, to be a terminal (10) mark to travellers. Then time overtook Yāsir, and he found its edge bite. Thus impartial are the dealings of God with the nations. Then there reigned after Ifrīḳis[5], Shamir Yar'ash, his son, who lived for a while, and complained of palpitation, and rose up with a mighty army, and trampled on 'Irāk like a man of valour, and, meaning to invade China, said to his army, March! And passing

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[1] Haddād son of Sharāhīl, according to Hamzah Al-Ispahāni, p 125.

[2] Nāshir Ibn Sharāhīl, Hamzah, p 126, the chronologers were uncertain where exactly Bilkīs came in The author follows Ibn Kutaibah throughout

[3] Tabari I 684 gives Yāsir An'am with the same genealogy as our author, and the same ground for the second appellation, Hamzah makes the second name Yun'im, which is like other second names that meet us on the Sabaean monuments, Mas'ūdi gives Nāshir, but his form of the second name agrees precisely with Abu 'l-'Alā's But see Ṭabari I 920

[4] Perhaps this only means a brazier. The story is told by Tabari l c, who gives as the inscription 'Statue of Yāsir An'am the Himyari, there is no way beyond, let none therefore undertake such a venture and perish'

[5] Hamzah gives his name as Shamir Yur'ish Abu Kārib Ibn Ifrīkis 'After Ifrīkis' is an error for 'after Yāsir' Tabari gives a different name

by Sughd he took it, and called it after his name (God knows best his purposes) *Samarkand*[1], whereof the original is Shamarkand Yet did not this avail him one shoe-latchet when he was visited by the pangs of death After him[2] there reigned (15) his son Al-Ḳran—and all that is on the earth is rubbish! So, when the divine decree fell upon him, he left all that he had built and raised, albeit had a throne benefited any one, it would have benefited him. Then rose Akran's son Tubba', whom all the chieftains obeyed He subdued the lands and invaded them. He humbled the champions and made them ashamed Yet had he to humble himself before God, and the evidence of his inferiority was established. Twenty years he remained at home and made no forays, then there reached him a report of the Turks, whose injuries he resolved to avenge, so he marched against them by way (20) of Anbār, and fell upon them unexpectedly China was the next object of his ambition, which he attacked once, and then returned, leaving at Tubbat some of his troops And it is said that they are found there to this day[3], generation succeeding generation Then there came to him 'the pitiless enemy,' and each man needs the services of the grave-digger! Then rose his son As'ad, to whom those near and far alike paid homage He followed the ways of his father, and dealt with his enemies as he had dealt This was Tubba' the middle, who dealt hardly and harshly with Himyar And the Himyar were greatly vexed by the length (25) of his reign, seeing that he dealt unjustly and haughtily with them Then they said to his son Hassān, from whom they hoped for good, 'What sayest thou to (P 97) killing thy father, and to our making thee a king whose swords shall be feared?' But he would not agree to the killing of his father, and feared to spill kindred blood. Then they gathered together against As'ad and slew him—either they assassinated him openly or else they slew him by guile; then they sought a king to reign over them, and returned to Hassān to bind their wound On his brow they set the crown, and when his control was supreme over the ways, he left alone none of those who had had a hand in the murder of his father, but tried to kindle (5) against each of them some mischief which he hid, albeit the Himyari's had made him swear that he would not have recourse to extremities in taking vengeance for the murder of his father Now Hassān[4], according to tradition, trampled on the

[1] This means, according to Hamzah, 'Shamir destroyed,' perhaps thinking of the Persian *kand*, 'dug'

[2] Hamzah places between them a king, Abu Mālik son of Shamir, and father of Al-Akran

[3] The place signified is Thibet Tabari assigns this exploit to Tubba', otherwise Tuban As'ad. Hamzah interpolates several more kings between Al-Akran and As'ad The destruction of Tasm and Jadīs is assigned by him to Dhū Jaishan son of Al-Akran

[4] Ṭabari I 750, Ibn Kutaibah, p 211

Jadīs until he left them a mere name, and their stable root in splinters. This was because their brethren the Tasm treated them with great tyranny. They had a king[1], surrounded by troops, to whom the brides were brought before their husbands And Jadīs fell upon Tasm[2], and applied a violent remedy to the (10) disease, and destroyed their chief, so Tasm invoked Hassān's aid, and he helped them Now Yemamah was at that time called *Jau*, and was greatly under the frown of the king. And there was there a woman named Yemamah, and she it is who is known as the Zarkā, she could see a long distance off, and one day she climbed up the wȧtch-tower (now all new things are from God), and she said, 'Know that Himyar is coming against you, or else that the trees are coming towards you' Then they said, 'What seest thou?' She said, 'I see[3] a man who (15) would seem to be eating a shoulder, or patch shoes with trees.' Now Hassān had commanded his army each of them to cut down a tree, and to carry it in front of him as a strong defence[4] This was a stratagem that he tried till he should overcome Jadīs. But they would not believe what Yemamah told them, so that the troops came upon them and cut them in pieces, and Jau was called *Yemamah*, after the woman. Now the chieftains disliked Hassān, and openly revolted from him[5], and went over to his brother 'Amr, and desired him (horrible act!) to kill his brother. And he complied with their request, and ploughed and stirred up (20) mischief for himself Now among the Himyar was a man called Dhū Ru'ain, who was experienced in all things hidden and manifest, who warned 'Amr against slaying his brother (now God knows well what He intends) But 'Amr determined to go on (and God it is who controls destiny), and he slew Hassān (for indeed love of the present world blinds mankind), and he lost his sleep, all night and all day Now the Ḥimyar of those days used to suppose that any one who killed his brother would be unable to sleep however hard he tried, and 'Amr complained of (25) his sleeplessness, and was told by trusty folk that he would not be able to sleep till he had destroyed those persons who had bidden him slay Hassān, who had brought him down to the shambles and not brought him out So the king bade a herald proclaim that the king wished to make an ordinance the following day, and the P 98 people gathered in throngs to the palace court, and he ordered that they should be introduced in companies, and he mowed them down like herbs with his swords,

[1] Tabari I 771

[2] In the story told by Tabari, the captain of the Jadīs got up a feast (in the style of one told by Herodotus) at which he and his comrades slaughtered the king of Tasm and his nobles A Tasmite named Riāh escaped, and demanded help of Hassān

[3] Tabari I 772, l 18

[4] Rather, according to Tabari, to conceal himself

[5] Tabari I 914, this took place, according to Tabari, in the midst of an expedition to 'Irak

and when Dhū Ru'ain entered, he reminded the king of his counsel, and he ordered him to be honoured and rewarded. Then 'Amr's affairs became confused, and the flame of his fire came near extinction; and being too weak and feeble to go on expeditions, he was on that account called *Mauthibān*, for *wathaba*[1] in their language means 'to sit.' And mankind have days of good and days of bad luck, and the day of death approached, and he, like others, found it come too soon. Then (5) there reigned after him 'Abd Kulāl[2],—and God, be it remembered, stands alone in His majesty. He, according to the tradition, was a believer, one who believed in Jesus, and hoped for good fortune thereby; then he came to grief, and it was as though he had never been feared. Then reigned Tubba' son of Hassān[3], the last of those who were called Tubba', and he, out of ambition, invaded Syria, the kings of Syria paid him homage, and, after having been revered, obeyed him. Then there came unto him men from Yathrib with complaints, telling of evil deeds of the Kuraizah and Banu Nadīr; and he made for Yathrib, and slew of the (10) Jews both rich and poor, but there came to him one of them who was old, and wrinkled like a wineskin, and told him that he could never destroy Taibah[4], because it was to be the refuge of a prophet of the family of Ishmael, and that whoever sought to do it harm, himself would come to grief So the king listened to what the man told him without murmur, and took a wise course, covering the Ka'bah with painted robes, and slaughtering six thousand camels. And, going off to Yemen, he bade his people adopt the Jewish faith,—and thy Lord was witness of both secret[5] and manifest. Then on him too death laid her hand, and he took up his abode in the tomb Then after him arose Marthad[6],—and none of the furniture (15) of this life endureth, after him reigned Walī'ah[7], and to him came a troop of calamities. Then reigned Abrahah son of Al-Sabbāh,—and what sanctuary is not profaned? Then arose Hassān[8], whom 'Amr had begotten, after whom the kingdom fell to pieces, wide confusion came over Himyar, and the neglected throne was seized by Dhu 'l-Shanātir[9], who 'put on the garments of treason[10]:'

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[1] Tabari derives it from *wathaba*, to jump, Hamzah gives an etymology similar to that in the text

[2] 'Ubaid Kulāl, according to Hamzah, Tabari and Mas'ūdi omit him

[3] The statements in the text agree with Ibn Kutaibah and Mas'ūdi [4] A name for Medinah

[5] The Christianity of the last king was, according to Hamzah, concealed.

[6] This name is very familiar to us from the Sabaean inscriptions

[7] So Ibn Kutaibah, in the text of Mas'ūdi his name is printed Wakī'ah

[8] Hamzah inserts as a king contemporary with the last Sahbān Ibn Muhrith; Mas'ūdi substitutes for Hassān 'Amr Ibn Dhī Kī'an

[9] Tabari calls this king Lakhni'ah Yanūf Dhū Shanātir, and makes him the immediate follower of Mauthibān.

[10] A euphemism for the crime of which Tabari and the other historians make him guilty

and when he played false and acted deceitfully, he was slain by the king Dhū (20) Nuwās, and found no leech for his wound After him reigned his slayer, and the divine power betrays him that is secure. God only is everlasting! His word falls upon the rock and it becomes like mist. Now Dhū Nuwās was a rebel, and fanatically attached to the religion of the Sabbath; he dug the 'trench[1],' and humbled the faces. He bade certain to be burnt who believed in the Gospel, and made a lamp thereof Then Dhū Tha'labān[2] went to the Abyssinians, and set (25) forth the doings of the Himyarite, unto a Hāmite king of the friends of Caesar[3], and he equipped an army for them, which set blazing the furnace of war. And Dhū Nuwās was put to flight, and went with his horse into the sea, and plunged into it for fear of his pursuer. This was the last that was heard of him, and p 99 God knows best whither he went and where he abode After him reigned Dhū Jadan[4], who took many a castle and a field And when the Abyssinians drove him to the shore, he did even as Dhū Nuwās had done, so grieved was he These were the kings of the Ḥimyar, whom destruction seized, and the eye saw them not again. Then the Abyssinians got control of San'ā, and they plundered Yemen (5) when it had no protectors First of them rose Aryāt[5], and he was slain by Abrahah[6], who thirsted for vengeance He attacked the Ka'bah with his elephant[7], and God guaranteed his destruction After him reigned Yaksūm—every one being the victim of events—until he perished, and Matrūk[8] came, who also was prostrated by death, being shot with arrows by the Persian, until he was made like unto them that perish Then Saif[9] became lord of Yemen, and neither mountain nor vale was safe He took into his service certain Abyssinians[10], and being one day apart from his attendants, they threw their spears at him and slew him, being (10) angry with him for what he had done, wherefore they slew him Is then any man immortal? Or can the good escape from harm? Nay, God has decreed death after trouble and anxiety! As for the land of Syria, the first of the Arabs who

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[1] Koran LXXXV 4 A pit in which the Christians were burnt alive

[2] Tabari I 927

[3] In the account given by Tabari, l c, this person goes first to the Byzantine monarch

[4] Dhū Jadan in Tabari appears as a poet, not as a king The author's narrative agrees with Ibn Kutaibah and Hamzah, while Mas'ūdi has a different story

[5] Aryāt is represented in Tabari as the Abyssinian king's general

[6] Two versions of this story are given by Tabari with but slight variations

[7] Tabari I 941, the Arabs are never weary of telling this story, to which there is an allusion in the Koran

[8] Brother of the last, according to Tabari, with whom the author's narrative here agrees.

[9] Saif Ibn Dhi 'l-Yazan Tabari I 950, &c.

[10] Tabari I 958

settled there was Salīh[1]; and who does not fear and tremble at fate? And the first of their kings was Al-Nu'mān son of 'Amr[2],—but his power abode not. Then there reigned after him his son Mālik, who walked in the footsteps of his father; then 'Amr son of Mālik,—now all dynasties come to an end save the power of the Creator, for He ceases not. And when 'Amr son of 'Āmir went out from Mārib[3] (15) for fear of the dam which burst, he sent three of his sons foraging, and hoped that he should see them returning. The three passed on with a large company, each of them desiring some benefit, and their father 'Amr perished ere he heard any tidings of them. He was followed by his son Tha'labah,—and the decree of God is victorious Now the Asad had invaded the country of the 'Akk[4], seeking to allay their doubts, and there was in 'Akk a king called Samlakah, against whom Jidh' son of Sinān Al-Asadi plotted mischief, and brought it upon him, and the Asad killed the 'Akk, and took goods whereon tithe had not been paid. Then (20) the 'Akk took to flight, and traversed the wide earth without certain direction, and Tha'labah son of 'Amr was displeased by the hard hap that had befallen the 'Akk, and swore that he would not stay, and went off, leaving the throne a bone of contention till he encamped with his followers in the Tihamah, and fought with the Jurhum with his troops From them he wrested the Ka'bah—yet each living being must assuredly one day fall prostrate and dead Then Khuzā'ah remained in the sacred territory, being a tribe of royal virtue and chivalry Till there came (25) Kusayy son of Kilāb, who gathered together Ḳuraish between the plain and the Harrahs[5] And he ousted Khuzā'ah from the kingdom, nor yet did his achievements save him from destruction. Then came Ghassān[6], they being the brethren of Khuzā'ah, to the land of Syria, and ousted their predecessors therefrom; and p 100 them too God destroyed when he wished. And of their kings whose names are handed down, the first was Al-Hārith the Great, he too joined the rest, and became a warning after he had persecuted and aggrandized himself, and burned the Arabs

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[1] Hamzah, p 115, Mas'ūdi IV 47

[2] According to Mas'ūdi, l c, the first of the Tanūkhite kings who reigned in Syria. According to this author the arrival of Salīh was posterior to this The names of Al-Nu'mān's successors are also given differently

[3] Celebrated town in S Arabia, visited in recent times by Glaser

[4] The whole of this paragraph diverges very widely from the historical authorities cited in the notes

[5] Black platforms of plutonic formation See Mr Doughty's map of this region.

[6] An account of the Ghassānide dynasty is given by Hamzah, l c, and also by Mas'ūdi, in the former, names are evidently repeated over and over again in order to fill up a space of time, but neither agrees with the list given here

till he was called the 'Burner'[1] Many a great hero did he slay, his surname was Abu Shimr[2], and his son Al-Hārith, from whom the kingdom was inherited by an heir who brought terrible punishment upon the king of Hīrah. Now Al-Hārith was the father of Halīmah, whose name was made proverbial by them that err not, (5) saying, 'The day of Halīmah is no secret:' meaning thereby the day whereon the two sons of Al-Hārith were slain after hard fighting, and whereon Al-Mundhir son of Mā'u 'l-Samā was overtaken by destruction. Now he had gone out on a foray to the land of Syria with a hundred thousand, who hastened past every mountain. And against him Al-Hārith sent a hundred lads, this being a harmless plot against Al-Mundhir, bidding the lads inform Al-Mundhir that they had come out to aid him, but of a truth they were messengers of destruction, who stripped him of the royal crown. And in this battle Ziyād[3] came to Al-Hārith, and asked (10) him concerning certain prisoners of the tribe of Asad, who were in chains, whom he loosed out of respect to Al-Nābighah And his fame, as he had desired, survived. Then 'Alkamah asked him concerning Shās[4], and he replied, 'A house that remains among mankind' And how many a faithfully recorded verse was chanted concerning Al-Hārith, and how many a rhyming lay! He was the father of Māriyah[5], whose earrings are mentioned in the proverb, albeit death did not overlook her any more than him. Then reigned his son Al-Hārith the Less, after his father; until the days humbled his pride. These three reigned one after the (15) other in a direct line, their names being alike, and they have remained But they who had them are departed, and their spirits are returned to their Lord

After them came Al-Nu'mān son of Al-Hārith, whom Al-Nābighah hoped would return, and by whose death he was afflicted[6] He was the son of Hujr, 'whose followers returned with clear eyes[7],' having left him in Jaulān[8], being weary of him. Al-Nābighah prayed that his grave might be watered with vehement showers[9], till it produced flowers and nenuphar. This assuredly is

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[1] Hamzah gives this name to a king named Jafnah the Less, 'and he it was who burnt Al-Hīrah'

[2] Hamzah, p 118, gives this name to a Ghassāni king Al-Mundhir Ibn Al-Hārith

[3] Name for Al-Nābighah Al-Dhubyani

[4] i e begged the life of his brother Sha's, whom Al-Hārith had taken prisoner at 'Ain Ubāgh, which was granted Kāmil (Eg) I 113, Ibn Kutaibah, p 216

[5] Supra, p 58, Hamzah gives this lady a different father

[6] The dirge on this king, to which allusion is made, is given in the *Christian Arabic Poets*, II 696

[7] Allusion to Al-Nābighah's verse, l c 702 The meaning was disputed in antiquity different readings and interpretations are quoted in the editor's note

[8] Name of a mountain in the Haurān

[9] l c 703

but 'a feeble effort,' yet every one who ventures high is sure to fall[1] Children of his were his namesake Nu'mān and 'Amr, for whom wine flowed freely in the (20) cups. Then both of them lay down in the grave, and those who woke in the morning knew not where they had passed their night Of Ghassān were 'Amr son of Al-Hārith, to whose favours, as well as to his father's, Al-Nābighah makes acknowledgement, and whom Al-Nābighah made the special subject of his praise[2], and Al-Aiham[3] father of Jabalah, who when king kept safe from crime. Yet he too drank his draught of death, and fate overcame him and took him. His son Jabalah became a Moslem and a Hanīf, but afterwards fell away, and joined the Greeks[4], his story is well known, and who is there whom the vicissitudes of fortune have left alone? These were the kings of Ghassān, who followed the course of the dead, each of them is now but a tale that is told, and God (25) knows who is good.

The kings of Hīrah :—First of them was Mālik Al-Azdi[5], by whom the assemblies were long kept going Then one of the arrows of fate smote him, and p. 101 no human fancy could reach him any more Then came his son Jadhīmah[6], and he too was bound to die. He stayed for a time in Anbār, then he would reside for a space at Al-Hīrah And he would associate with none but the Pointers, for he was too proud to talk with men in the mornings and evenings[7] His sister's name was Umm 'Amr, and the most intimate of his attendants was 'Adī son of Nasr One day, it is said, he became drunk, having taken more than (5) his fill of wine, and it is said that he gave his sister in marriage to 'Adī, and she passed the wedding night. And when Jadhīmah woke he was told thereof, and repented him after his joy And being incensed against 'Adī, he bade his head to be struck off And his sister gave birth to 'Amr son of 'Adī, and he became precious in the eyes of his uncle the Asadī[8] And when he grew into a stripling, and his countrymen hoped for advantage from him, one day his uncle rode out hunting, and 'Amr went forth at no slow pace, and he got lost in God's wide earth, and remained with the pasturing beasts And after he had gone far afield, (10) he was brought back by Jadhīmah's two companions, 'Akīl and Mālik, who restored him to the king when the hair on his face had become black Then said

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[1] Apparently with reference to Al-Nābighah's dirge.

[2] l c 644 The verse, to which allusion is made, is to be found on p 645, l 2

[3] Hamzah, p 121 [4] Hamzah, p 122 [5] Tabari I 750

[6] The author has omitted a king

[7] Tabari only says that he performed the functions of kāhin, or conjurer, but Rāghib Ispahānī has this story (Muhādarāt I 167) after Ibn Kutaibah, p 217

[8] This should be the Azdi.

Jadhīmah, 'You have done well, so choose what you will have' And they chose to remain Jadhīmah's companions so long as they lived, and they were his associates forty years, and never in all that time repeated to him the same story. Then he was cajoled by Al-Zabbā [1], and his story is well known. After him (15) reigned 'Amr, for Kasīr [2] had planned that he should succeed [3], and it is said that it was 'Amr who built Al-Hīrah and marked it out [4],—and he remained king until the sovereignty was withdrawn from him by a destiny which slew him, when he repented of the acts of piety that he might have performed but omitted. After him reigned his son Imru 'ul-Kais [5],—and the folly of a foolish man will not hasten his end. Others however say that after 'Amr his son Al-Hārith Muharrik [6] reigned,—and indeed every kingdom save that of the Eternal becomes dispersed. After Imru 'ul-Kais reigned his son Al-Nu'mān the Great, who built Al-Khawarnak [7], and abode for a time, until one day he looked pensively at Al-Khawarnak and his kingdom so full of pleasures, and asked, 'Must all that I see perish?' They answered, 'Yea, notwithstanding thy pains' So he abdicated the throne, and (20) sought the face of his Lord before the evil day. This is recorded by 'Adī son of Zaid, and all of them walk in the fetters of destiny. After him reigned his brother Al-Mundhir [8], and each of us had best beware of God His mother was 'Heaven's Water,' but she did not escape for the purity of her names Al-Mundhir invaded Syria [9], and was slain by the Ghassān, and his son Al-Mundhir reigned after him,—some of time's wrongs are kind This Al-Mundhir went to take vengeance for his father, and met with a fate, which occasioned great trouble at (25) the time, at the hands of Al-Hārith [10]. He was slain while seeking to avenge his

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[1] The story is told at length in Tabari I 757 sqq

[2] Owner of the horse Al-'Asa, see supra, p 20

[3] The story told by Tabari and others is that Kasīr mutilated himself like Zopyrus to obtain the confidence of Al-Zabbā, and then introduced an army into Al-Hīrah in sacks

[4] Tabari I 768

[5] Hamzah, p 99, after Tabari I 834, who assigns him 114 years.

[6] According to Hamzah after Tabari, Imru 'ul-Kais came to the throne after it had lapsed, and he it was who was called the first Muharrik And according to both historians Al-Nu'mān was the second Imru 'ul-Kais It is perhaps not surprising that the author should have got into some confusion about these names which are repeated by the chroniclers to make the lists of kings suit their chronological schemes

[7] The following story with the verses of 'Adī Ibn Zaid that attest it is given by Tabari I 853

[8] His *son* according to Tabari I 882, and others

[9] Tabari, p 881, gives a different account

[10] According to Tabari it was his grandfather who was killed by Al-Hārith The opinion adopted by the author is Ibn Kutaibah's

father at 'Ain Ubāgh. Then reigned his brother 'Amr son of Hind [1],—yet could he find no refuge in rock or mountain. By God's command Ibn Kulthūm slew him, whether he was guilty or innocent Then reigned Al-Nu'mān [2] son of Al-Mundhir, who was not wanting in firmness · it was he about whom the poet 'Adī son of Zaid [3] used his efforts with the king of Persia until he set him on the throne, and left his brothers and tried not him. Afterwards he put 'Adī in fetters, and he died in prison. No one in this world can be ransomed Then the son of 'Adī Ibn Zaid accused Al-Nu'mān, so that a trap was laid for him by Kisra [4], and Abu Kābūs was thrown into the elephants' house to meet his end Then ended the dynasty of Al-Mundhir, and fate is quite strong enough for that And Kisra set over Al-Hīrah Iyās son of Kabīsah, and then came Islam, and put an end to the trouble. Iyās perished at 'Ain Tamr He was mourned by Zaid of the horses, since they were of one family, both of them being sprung from Ṭay', albeit a pedigree will not keep a man alive Old is the tale of the kings of Persia, yet their line too ended. Darius was slain by Alexander, and the royal blood was left unavenged. Then after him rose the kings of the provinces, —and indeed the world consists of new-comers and those that are gone by,—and when their time was over Azdashīi [5] succeeded to the throne, and he announced the return of the sovereignty to the Persians. Then he perished and Sābūr arose, and 'the grafted palm will give thee of its fruit [6];' after him rose Hurmuz, with whose good sense scandalmongers found fault [7] After him Bahrām [8], namesake of Mars, and he found no helper Likewise Bahrām the Second was looked upon by the clearsighted fates Then rose Bahrām the Third, and time, when it cheers, is false Then rose a king called Yūsa, but according to others Nūsa [9]. Then succeeded a second Hurmuz, and what king's reign does not cease? He

p 102 (5) (10) (15)

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[1] Hamzah, p 109

[2] The author follows Ibn Kutaibah in omitting some names

[3] The story is told by Tabari I 1018, and in the Aghāni II ad init

[4] The story is told at length by Tabari, p 1028

[5] The form given by most authors is Ardashir, and this is etymologically right The Beyrut MS has the same form as the Leyden copy, which probably therefore goes back to the original scribe, and has the authority of Ibn Kutaibah

[6] The application of this saying, with which cp p 9 supra, is to be found in the story of the birth of Sābūr as told by Tabari, p 823, &c His mother turned out to be a daughter of the king Ashak, whose whole race Sābūr's father had sworn to exterminate

[7] Tabari, p 833 According to the story told there, he was accused of intending to rob his father of the crown, and in order to prove his loyalty cut off his own hand, and sent it to his father, alleging that a mutilated person could not be king, and that by this act he had resigned all claim to the crown Ibn Kutaibah speaks more generally

[8] An old name for the planet Mars.

[9] The right form is Narsa

too perished, leaving an unborn child Sābūr; and the kingdom got into confusion after him. Then was born Sābūr of the Shoulders [1], whose story is not unknown. After him rose Azdashīr [2], and some one pointed him out to death [3] Then rose Sābūr and dealt justly with the people [4], had not his soul received a death-warrant. Then rose Bahrām son of Sābūr, and succeeded to the throne, but afterwards perished. Then rose Yazdajird, and he, as the Persians tell, was unjust and (20) tyrannical towards them [5]. But God's fate does not overlook tyranny, and he was kicked, it is said, by a horse [6], and so that cord was broken Then there rose after him his son Bahrām Jūr: and is there on earth a king who does no wrong? Verily God has implanted wrong-doing in men's nature, and given them authority over all other creatures. Anūsharwān had a coffin for his castle after his famous palace. Ḳubādh was removed from this world by death, Kisra-Abarwāz lived long without a rival, then perished, and became as though he had never reigned And when the blessed Prophet heard the story of his daughter Būrān [7], he said, (25) 'Never shall a nation prosper that has given a woman charge of its affairs.' Many, many a king, of Arabs and other nations, has been lost like one who cannot find his way or refuses to appear And if this be the way with kings, what can the p 103 common people or the poor say? Destruction has not spared the liberal either over Hātim the funeral melodies sounded, Ka'b Ibn Māmah saw a look on the face of one of those who were sharing the water, and, giving his share to the brother of Namir, perished in the wilderness. Likewise the heroes and champions of the Arabs have not been spared by the shafts and darts of fortune. What (5) happened to 'Utaibah [8] son of Al-Hārith, brother of Yarbū', albeit he had a great following in the field? Fate sent against him Dhu'āb son of Rubayyi'ah at Khaww, who brought upon him a day of mischief Bistām son of Kais [9] made a raid to keep off famine, and he was slain by 'Āsim son of Khalīfah. 'Amr son of Ma'dī Kariba [10] was slain at Nahāwend, he died a martyr indeed, and it was as though

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[1] According to Tabari he went as a spy into Caesar's camp, and being recognized, was sewn into an oxhide, out of which he escaped, and afterwards took the Roman Emperor prisoner

[2] See note 5, p 119 [3] According to Tabari he was deposed owing to his cruelty

[4] So Tabari, p 846. [5] Tabari, p 847 [6] Ṭabari, p 849

[7] Būrān is mentioned by Tabari, tradition of what the Prophet said is in Ibn Kutaibah, p 224

[8] Hamāsah, p 387. 'On the day of Khaww the Asad won a victory, and 'Utaibah son of Al-Hārith, who is called *Sayyād Al-Fawāris* (the hunter of the horsemen), was killed by Dhu'āb'

[9] Hamāsah, p 457, Kāmil (Eg) I. 134

[10] A poet and champion who was contemporary with the Prophet, and died in the Caliphate of Omar, or according to others Othman, on an expedition There were different accounts of the place and time of his death, which is said to have been caused by a stroke of paralysis. Aghāni XIV 28

he had not perished 'Antarah[1] son of 'Abs[2] met his doom at the hands of Asad Al-Rahīs Al-Sulaik son of Sulakah[3] was slain by the Banū Hanīfah It is idle to repine or to be angry with fate! 'Āmir[4] son of Tufail died of scab, and (10) Zaid of the horses died of fever, only 'Āmir was taken unbelieving, whereas Zaid came on a visit to the Prophet, and swore allegiance to him like a firm confessor. Khālid[5] son of Ja'far was slain by Ibn Zālim in the protection of Al-Nu'mān, so wonderful are time's vicissitudes. How many a brave champion is gone, who fought so well with his opponent! And this is no exhaustive list of those that are gone, but merely a selection.

You know well too that time's hand does not spare the trumpeting brute (15) called Abu 'l-Mazāḥim[6], with which the kings frighten their enemies, and by whose help they benefit their friends Albeit he tramples on the ground with four mighty pillars, and distinguishes between friend and foe He came to battle and was slain by the Thakafite[7], had he been given a longer span, the ravages of time would still have carried him off. And by the hand of Al-Muhallab there perished another like unto him, who came in search of food And were any living creature save God given a life as long as that of the stars, escaping from all mischief and hurt, he would still, as Ru'bah[8] says, 'be kept in store for old age or death' There escapes not from the claws of time the tawny lion, whose food is not *sahm*[9] or *mard*[10], but who tears every day some prey which the robber's arts (20)

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[1] This and the following personage are coupled with the last in Aghānī, l c, as heroes of irresistible prowess

[2] 'Abs was a distant ancestor, and the poet is usually called 'Antarah of 'Abs Various accounts of his death are collected in the Aghānī VII 152, among them this

[3] Described in the Aghānī XVIII 134 as the fiercest of the Arabs, the greatest poet, the fastest runner, and the best at finding his way

[4] See supra, p 57, notes 2 and 4

[5] Aghānī X 17, where the story is told at length Khālid was chief of the Hawāzin, and, having incurred the enmity of the tribes 'Abs and Dhubyan, went to the court of Al-Nu'mān, bringing a present of a horse Here he met Al-Hārith Ibn Zālim, survivor of the tribe Yarbū' which had been raided by Khālid years before A quarrel ensuing led to the murder of Khālid by Al-Hārith at the court

[6] Name for the elephant

[7] The Thakafite referred to is Abu 'Ubaid Ibn Mas'ūd, who killed an elephant at the battle of Kuss Al-Nātif, Aghānī XXI 217, Usd Al-ghābah, s v. His death was bewailed by his fellow-tribesman Abu Mihjan Al-Muhallab Ibn Abi Sufrah was his contemporary, whose wars with the Khawārij are described at length in the Kāmil of Al-Mubarrad.

[8] An account of this poet is given in the Aghānī XXI, but the line referred to is not quoted

[9] Name of a plant

[10] A form of the fruit of the arāk.

cannot ensnare. Nay more, he frightens and keeps the people in their homes, his eyes are like two burning torches, or two camp fires. The ass turns to fly when she scents him; and he alarms a whole caravan, when they know he is near. In some terrible place he feeds two whelps with the maneless lioness that gives them suck. Many a torn victim is in his cave, rendered undistinguishable in shape, whose orphans he overwhelmed by his capture, and whom he ousted from (25) the possessions that he had won. He grew weary of hunting beasts, and abandoned them, and became enamoured of human flesh and sought after that. If the morning traveller came too late for him, he would attack the loiterer, and fiercely. A man would make a meal for him; and even the flesh of a couple p. 104 would not be overmuch. In the prime of his life he could overcome the black ostrich, and the mountain goat could not protect himself from him. Often at midday he would pounce on some secure flock of sheep and take the best of them to his home-keeping mate. Often at eventide he would make a raid upon some lowing ox, and return to his cubs with a wild calf or wild ass that had grown fat, feeding on the sweet-smelling fields. Little thought he of the antelope; that he would leave the poor wolf to chase. And in his old age there passes by him (5) a man having in his hands a bow and arrows; and he leaps on one enemy and embraces him, and rips his body open and disembowels it; but the rest of the company shoot at him with axes and spears, and though he thinks it impossible, with their missiles they make him like a porcupine, and when he is dead they at first think he is only asleep, until the truth appears, when they in their spite raise him on their swords, and so his brilliant career is over,—that long career wherein by his violence he earned the name *Kaswar*[1], and by his leaps the name *Miswar*, 'the leaper.' Or else there comes against him some captain with a band of horse, who, finding him crouching on his foreleg, thrusts him through with lances levelled, or cruelly hits him in a fatal spot. Or if he escape the one and the (10) other, still his soul is discharged by old age, contented with a scanty living after such splendid fare. Neither do the strokes of fate miss the fair-clad leopard, well-accustomed by long practice to sudden raids. The shepherds fear his onsets, and kind friends hasten to the traces of the wounds that he has inflicted. For him too there is assigned on some of his circuits a keeper of sheep or one who does not keep them, who thrusts a spear into his heart and saves the flock from his onslaught, who takes his skin, once his pride, and covers with it the mount of some runaway coward. Neither does the wolf escape the heel of time, even though he obtain the sheep that he covets, constantly snatching some lamb from

[1] Supposed to be derived from the root Kasara, 'to tear.'

the flock, and loosening some of its cords Chased by the farmer's hounds he escapes them, and seizes the keeper's own lamb and devours it. He protects the (15) cubs of the hyena[1] after she has drunk the intoxicating cup that is not wine but death, treating them as his own, and feeding them with the product of his arts. At times he is starving and miserable, and even when hungry is envied for his fullness. 'Tis supposed that he has been drinking blood, whereas in truth he has had no lack of destitution. And often indeed the flocks perish before him and he (20) has a merry time, and he catches the shepherd asleep and has a feast Yet are his fasts longer than his feasts; and thirst is co-partner with his vile nature. With such a life howbeit he is satisfied with all its hardships, and why should his miserable nature avoid it? Then one day he sees a lad, who is no fool, alone with a small flock, and this excites his cupidity Howbeit 'there is many a wound in the arrows of a lad,' so when the wolf makes his attack, our stripling having a bow in his hand, sends one of his arrows into the last place that the wolf would wish, and the wolf's cubs become orphans, and sadly do they miss their shrewd (25) and sagacious father. The hyena too is no stranger to death, whether he die a natural death, or whether there chase him from behind his ears the father of P 105 some family who makes him their food[2], so that they avert with his flesh the pangs of hunger when they overtake them Or some morning, it may be, a savage dog surprises him, and hurries after him furiously, and takes him cunningly, so that neither running nor leaping saves him. Or, a torrent of water comes while the hyena is with his spouse in his lair, and the water carries them both away, and when morning comes he is drowned and voiceless He might as well have never howled over a carcase, and never battened on the remains (5) of the lion's feast. How merrily used he to run over the stones! And now his skin is made into a mantle! Such are time's vicissitudes! It makes the saturated thirsty; the fox does not escape for all his cunning, neither does the spirit of the dun hyena of the sand-hills. Death too separates the hare from his mate, and cuts him off, neither is the rabbit's mother helped by her prayer 'God make me quick-footed, and stay-at-home, able to outrun the arrow up the hill' She too is troubled by some snare, and finds herself suddenly in a bag, or else by some early-rising sporting Nimrod, whose heart is madly set upon the chase, who spurs against her on the high ground a fiery hunter, with a ribbon (10) round his neck[3], or else sends against her some falcons which break the vertebrae of her back; or else an eagle pounces upon her, and so trouble overtakes her

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[1] There is an allusion to this in a proverb, Maydānī I 182

[2] The flesh of the hyena is lawful for food

[3] The neck of the horse that won in the chase was marked with blood Mustatraf II 72

Or can the decree of God be foiled by the wild ass, over whom day and night pass, keeping him still fresh, by no means decrepit, now braying, now rumbling, with five or eight mates, who trample the ground with no light step, having fed on plants watered by the spring rain, and scrambled for the puddles and *Sumi*[1]? (15) Off flies their fur, and only their flesh and bones remain, until the meadow plants dry up, when he takes them wherever there is the trace of a stream, and when *Al-Han'ah* or *Al-Dhirā'* rises, and they are hastening to a watering-place, the summer heat kindles fiery thirst, and they bethink them of some deep pond, whither at the false dawn they descend But fate has set some bowman on the watch, with a twanging weapon in his hand, a weapon which says to the victim die! and it dies, a weapon selected by some vagabond of the tribe 'Abs or Kahlān, who watched it when it was a growing wand, until it became a magician's (20) wand in his hand Every summer[2] he would bring it water to shorten the dry period for it, and at last when its growth was complete and it was suitable for the chase, he came one morning and detached it, with no hasty or violent wrench, and set it on a stand in his tent There he let it imbibe the juice of the bark, and then applied the knife. And when he had shaped it to his satisfaction, he took it to one of the fairs of the Arabs, merely intending to learn its value, not with any idea of selling it to any one to live upon its spoil There, though offered for it sacks and garments, he flaunted it among the people, and refused to (25) come to terms, and was unwilling to return home without it, and though offers were constantly increased, he thought it ruin to part with it, and going off to p. 106 a watering-place with it in his hand, sat down to watch for the beasts At the end of the night the she-asses come trooping, with the warlike champion in front; and now piercing death approaches, and he is shot by one who feeds on wild-beasts' venison, who earns the title *flanker* or *liverer* Straightway he hits him, and the mistresses abandon the mate who has found his death-blow, and the straight-shooter coming out of his hiding-place takes him to his little children, and makes of his flesh strips and slices, while his skin is despatched to the tanner Like him does the short-nosed wild bull meet death—the creature who trembles (5) if a man sees him, who endures for a long time, during which the hunter can devise nothing against him, and then one day he looks in the direction of the river-bed, and the channels greet him with a flowery carpet, and the high wind inspirits him with his skin free from wounds, till the north wind drive him to take refuge near some far-off lotus, nowhere near the other lotuses, where he

[1] According to the Beyrut edition the name of a spring The description here given is after Farazdak

[2] The whole of this description is from Shammākh (Jamharah, pp 156, 157)

remains the long night complaining of the cold, the clouds emptying their load of hail upon him: and at morning the hunter comes upon him with his hounds, keen-scented after game, stout, tough fighters, with eyes like grey *'adris*[1] flowers, (10) with leashes fastened to their necks, a very torment to the quarry. When he sees them, he turns his back to fly, fancying that a fire is raging in the desert. Then, after fleeing far, he rounds in fear and cold, and plunges with the two spears that grow apart from each other in his head; and the dogs retreat from him and leave him the victory, while the boldest of the pursuers lies prostrate in the dust And when he feels sure of escape there crosses his path a mounted horseman, from whose arrows he receives a wound in the breast or in the thigh, and who returns bringing with him the wild bull to his hearth after his hunt[2]. Death over- (15) looks neither the absent nor the present, and 'God's is the matter before and after, and that day shall the believers rejoice' So also with his snubnosed mate, she too has no long term here, for often her calf falls into the power of some hungry wolf, some savage, wandering, rebellious creature, he makes the attack while she is in a desert land, heedless, and then when she returns to give milk to her calf, she finds nothing but blood and bones Then she abides distraught three or four days, and after that returns to her feasting and watering. This makes her forget her calf, and she is satisfied to let things go their way Had time overlooked her, she would not have blamed it, as it was, time afflicted her (20) with adversity, and not she it. Neither is security from the assaults of destiny granted to the gazelle which never is sheltered by wall, but strays at large in the wide and empty plains, that spends not its nights between *shīh* and *alā*[3], but haunts instead the countries that abound in *gum acacia* and *arāk*, where it is safe from the hunters' nets. God sends it fatness, and mischief is removed from it. There it pleases itself with the *arāk* fruit, ripe and unripe, having taken to itself a lair with a bed, the fruit having stained its mouth cherry-colour, it being red (Adam) and its mate black (Eve), and the two in a Paradise if only they could (25) abide there Not indeed that they resemble our first parents, though their colours correspond with their names,—and while they are in this beatific existence, fate p 107 fouls their clear water, and the snake is sent to them, the snake by which it was decreed that the old Adam should fall, which finds our fair gazelle astray under the shade of some bush, fearing no mischief, and the seducer falls upon it with its poisonous fang, and gives it a taste of death, death which separates it from all its friends. It might as well never have tasted young herb or old, and never

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[1] Said to be a plant with a red flower, capable of sustaining moisture in great quantity

[2] Compare Abu Dhu'aib, Jamharah, pp 131, 132

[3] Forms of wormwood.

(5) snuffed the pleasant Zephyr Off flies his mate, miserable for loss of him, and then after the lapse of time becomes the mate of another; to be herself in her turn the prey of that destruction which gathers them that come after to them that have gone before. 'The life of this world is but a deceptive ware'

Nor are the eyes of misfortune closed to the speckled ostrich, who goes without shoes and sandals, who drinks neither at watering-place nor channel, and is satisfied with colocynth and marjoram. When he is feeding in the *Tannūm*[1], he might seem an Ethiopian (not a Greek) slave. He wears neither bracelet nor earrings, (10) and rarely leaves the *karṭaf*[2], he talks to his mate in a husky croak, and the female lays her eggs in haste. She wraps them in her wings so that they sustain no damage, and soaks them in *zājil*[3] till they are saturated He is deaf and understands nought that is said; he wears no covering on his head, light or heavy Lank and blinking, with a head like a pointless arrow, he too has death ready to seize him, whom, though he run in fear, he cannot forestall Whether it come in a horseman's lance, or some unforeseen wise, such as, when he goes feeding with the females, when they come out at morn or even, and there comes suddenly across the sky a thundercloud, not one that has spent its water. Hastening down the (15) valley to his young who have no warm coat of feathers, a lightning bolt strikes his shoulder, and, see! death crows over him. Nor does the arrow of adversity miss the chamois half white, half black, the chamois who is so shy of mankind, who wanders feeding in the red herbs and the black, never fearing orphanhood for his young, whose drink is the pure water fouled by no staling, water given directly by a bounteous heaven to its reservoir, clear blue water which inspires no fear in him that drinks it, water, the flashing of which delights him that has well drunk— (20) how much more him that is athirst, and whose throat is parched! The chamois then, after staying long on a crag below which is the nest of the falcon, suddenly finds that some prince has exiled from his land a horseman who used to be ever shooting the wild game with his arrows, who is driven by hunger and fright to a mountain-top covered by flaky clouds And when he has fasted long and feels that his Lord has misguided him, he shoots the chamois, and hits his liver, and rising to relieve his hunger takes his knife and divides him into pieces, and kindles a fire where he is, and after eating a little of his flesh, goes away and leaves him to broil Likewise the chamois' mate does not fulfil the tale of her years, she (25) goes the way of the old beast who leaves the pure stream, and in the main matter

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[1] A black plant. [2] Name of a bitter herb, but it may also mean a robe

[3] Liquor ex postica parte struthiocameli tempore incubandi effluens

the two are alike And the young one does not escape either, but is sure to perish by some painful doom

(P 108) Nor do the feet of trouble slide off the fiery stallion, that is neither galled nor jaded, but is set down among valuable flocks, which kill their time among sand-hills, that from early morning consume the *arāk* and the purslain the mortal who shoots them might as well have never shot, the enemy are driven off them with lances, and the riders pull tight their reins in order not to approach them. Yet even this stallion decays and becomes decrepit, though he never carried one stick of a saddle. He drinks such a draught of death as makes him forget the bitter herbs, after he has grown secure and ceased to fear rivalry. (5) Else there befalls him some appointed end other than this, such as fate can always divert itself with Some nightly guest comes to his master in a year wherein the clouds have played false; bringing in his train riders who have been ever since evening in the saddle, making for this man, hoping to obtain from him a service, whereby they might avert the misery of that year. He, wishing to build up glory for his young ones, glory based on a secure foundation, and thrilled with ambition, makes for his stallion and hamstrings him The nightly host strikes him with a sword, and one of death's ministers fetches him; and he delivers the fat of his hump to the cooking pot, and the mistress of the house saves up dried strips thereof (10) His flesh is set in pans that are filled for the entertainment of the guests. And for one that meets his doom it is the same in whatever way he meets it; he may have guarded against it, but he did not escape it notwithstanding. Neither are the eyelids of death closed against the swift steed, who outruns the wind, who presents ever fresh beauties to the eye, and whose iron hoofs carry gold Ample of skin, how greedily he seizes on the course! (15) Round his feet are bands of silver, his hoofs are of emerald and crush the stones. No spots has he, nor whites over his eyes; when he neighs he arouses delight, food is brought him every morning and evening, and he is visited when the barking ceases. Every winter evening milch camels with abundant milk are brought him, and all *Nizār*[1] gives him the palm for racing Some day his owner is surprised by a foray (the shafts of time cannot be averted) he is wounded in the chest with a spear-point, and he and his master perish with bleeding foreheads He might as well never have won a race, and never had an evening draught. (20) Neither do God's fore-ordained shafts make a mistake and pass over the beaked eagle, who drags to his eyrie the creatures of the desert, who makes the top of Radwā[2] or else Tadūm[3] his home; his beak is like an axe, some cold morning when shaking off its wing

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[1] = Arabia

[2] Mountain near Medinah

[3] Locality unknown

the hoar-frost, it sees far off a gazelle, and hopes to bring it home to its chick too meagre as yet to move, so it swoops hoping to get some good, but its chance of booty fails it, for it strikes against some jagged crag, which breaks its wing where it joins its body, and it falls, being at the last gasp, on land, whether far from or near water, and up comes Reynard, Reynard whom it has long oppressed, (25) robbing him of his mate and young; and he makes its flesh food for his cubs, thus p 109 is the time of its end come, and the chicks are left on a high mountain, 'poor things that stretch their wings each morning, when they hear the blowing of the wind, or the croaking of the raven[1]' Thus destiny has dealt with their dam.

For the raven, too, the sword of fate has an edge—the raven that hops about the house, as though his thigh sinews were tied, the raven clothed by God (5) with the garment of youth, which, when it hears of a palm-tree with ripe dates, travels thitherward, avoiding the fowlers and when secure it alights in the plain, with eyes so clear that they might be the water in the hollow of a rock. Though secure, it still is prudently cautious, and though elated, still well-skilled in its trade Maybe it alights on some camel old and galled, and picks out its eye with its beak, then makes for the flesh on its back When the time arrives for the parting of the tribe, it croaks, and it is sport to it when the caravan hastens. Many a man (10) has cursed it, and prayed that it might pass its morning in a pool of blood. And so it goes on until it becomes old and is called by the Arabs *Ghudāf*, when by the command of the Eternal it drinks a cup of poison When its offspring and progeny increase, fate marks for it some lad with a big stone in his hand, who hits it some moment when it heeds not, and when fate is lying in ambush behind it And then the name 'purblind,' by which it was called in jest, not in virtue of any natural defect, turns out to be true So it is wounded, and has to put up with trouble like that of him who has drunk too much wine, and the sportive boy comes up with it, having a trowel in his hand, and fastens a hempen cord to its leg, tying it up like a beast, and begins to mock in his mirth, saying to his cap- (15) tive, 'Why do you not croak?' And thus he continues until the curtain of night is unfolded, when the child returns to his home, and they fasten the raven to a chair, and the child fearing advantage may have been taken of its sleeping hours comes to it early next morning, not indeed with any intention of letting it loose and he finds it has breathed its last, and has gone out from prison into liberty

Neither do God's decrees overlook the dove which would mount some branch of the thicket, its wood being green and tender, and time dealing gently with it, her

[1] Supra, p 66

feeding-ground was hard by, and her drinking-place easy of access, so that even (20) a fool could find it. And after each visit to the water she would recite her various measures, like the musician at a drinking-bout, who mounts the platform to play, and drives away the cares of the drinkers by the beauty of her *raml* or *mazmūm*[1]. Fools think she is weeping, but she complains not of her life, her notes are all pleasure and delight, and no blame attaches to her. And one evening, when, her heart hiding no fear, she is improvising on her branch, fate sets upon her a kite, with sharp talons, no respecter of persons, that tears open her breast, and she finds (25) death very near. And the chick is left an orphan to weep for her evening and night.

Neither does the locust escape from the assaults of fate, the locust whose p. 110 feeding-ground is every portion of the earth that is covered with green, whereon she alights at night with eye like the nail of a cuirass. The departure of the day gladdens her and makes her fly, and it vexes her when she is hit by any rain-laden cloud. She passes her night on a field of some poor man with little of chattels or cattle, around her a flock of locusts, clustering together at the chilly hour; and at that cool time the poor man rises, and brings with him a wallet or a sack, wherein he throws them, well knowing what he is about, and he squeezes them in a stream (5) of water, not as the locust of 'Ayyār[2] was squeezed, and they become food for his young ones, who have long had no proper diet. Neither can the wiles of fate be eluded by the bee, seeking flower-juice on the mountain top, hard of ascent, whence death would have kept aloof, if it feared any height,—the bee that flits about amid bugloss and dandelion (?), and returns home after midday. In her house she has a store, such as the most liberal could not supply, into a cup of pleasing purity she sets a draught of honey thought to be a medicine. For her destruction some man in rags is appointed, some man not expecting luxurious (10) living, who brings with him pans and staves, and some hungry urchins anxious to earn some food, of the tribe of Hudhail[3] son of Mudrikah or of Fahm. With greedy heart he rises early and climbs with the climbers, until his body is raised aloft, and then he falls upon the bees, hanging between hempen ropes, like a poor man bent on getting honey, and sends a cloud of smoke upon them, till they come

[1] Names of melodies.

[2] The phrase comes in a verse of Masrūh Ibn Adham Al-Na'ami, quoted in T. A. V. 256, &c. According to one explanation, 'Ayyār was a man, and Locust the name of his horse, according to another, a man named 'Ayyār caught a locust which, when he put it into his mouth, escaped through a breach in one of his teeth, according to another, a man caught several locusts, and, as he did not broil them sufficiently, some escaped. See also Maydānī II. 47.

[3] Allusion to the story of Ta'abbata Sharran told in Hamāsah, p. 36, where the poet, being of the tribe of Fahm, robbed the honey of the Hudhail.

(15) forth, afflicted, not thirsty; and the bee encounters some small bird, that thinks it good eating.

Neither are the plots of fate to be diverted from the serpent which lodges in a rock, and has the advantage of a distant death; at summer time he issues from his hole, and will not let his neighbour sleep, he fears no trying famine, when hungry he eats the dust, he keeps a store of trouble in his cave, and has on him as it were the cuirass[1] of Kais son of Zuhair Even when he is in no fear he blows a blast that could fell a tree. And some spring day when he is sunning himself on the top of a mountain, fate milks for it what it has in store, and a shepherd (20) is attracted towards it well skilled at slinging stones. He crushes its head with a flint, and spares the reptiles the trouble of fighting it. Or does the boa's mother enjoy immortality, albeit all her life she is in the shade? She too grows feeble from old age, and yet she had been the great calamity, noted for ill-doing, the thought of her disturbed the snake-charmer's slumbers; trouble passed off her, until she perished of old age, without tasting the vengeance she had incurred. Neither can the bristling scorpion escape, though the period accorded it be long: some child stamps upon it with his sole, and its inborn venom avails it (25) not, albeit, for fear of the harm it may do, the child calls it by some other's name 'God destroys the wrong-doers' Neither does 'the mother of Māzin' escape,—I mean not by Māzin the brother of Tamīm or Hawāzin, but the poor p 111 despised ant, that is of no honour among mankind, that lives in its ant-hill in sand or soil, gathering in the summer food for the year, and fearing not how the hot wind blows, when the time of her end approaches, there is assigned her by fate some winged fowl, or instead she is despatched by the heel of some lad, or some other effective blow. Immortality is not given to any land creature, nor to any (5) creature of the sea, that swims in the waves. Ask of the whale that swallowed Jonah whether it escaped death; or of the fish that dives in the Tigris, covered as it were with a cuirass, that is after a time dragged from the rushing, seething water into the flame of a fiery furnace. Ask of the frog that croaks when the stars appear, like a champion on the battle-field, or like one who warms himself when the weather is cold. and of his mate that stays constantly in the water. Ask of the snake that attacks the pearl-diver, which the Arabs fancy is the guardian of the pearls

As for the dead man,—God brighten his face!—he has attained his desires,

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[1] This cuirass figures in the narrative of the Aghānī XVI 28 Al-Rabī' Ibn Ziyād offered Kais a price for a cuirass in the latter's possession, and then rode off with it, without having made an agreement

for they who have obeyed God and his Apostle 'are with those whom God has (10) favoured, prophets, saints, martyrs, pious men,—a right noble company!' If he have left the hill of Damascus, with its plain and its waters, he is drinking among large-eyed Hūris a cup mixed with camphor, if he have been provided for his journey with a winding-sheet, he has now changed it for 'silk' if he have left the company of his brethren, he is now near his Lord in the abode of life. He is removed from the narrow quarters to the abode of eternity and joy. 'Such is the next world, which we shall give unto them that would not exalt themselves nor do (15) harm in this, and the result is to them that fear' How many a lost sheep did he seek and guide aright! How many a deposit did he guard and faithfully return! How many a promise did he observe and keep! How many a vanity did he abstain from uttering! If Almighty God have removed him from us, He has taken him near Himself, and blessed him, if He have taken him away, He has not left his place without a successor He saw his son in manhood's prime, and his son's sons a growing family. Nor is there a better heritage than a son known to be pious Each time he makes mention of God he lightens his father's sins (20) Not indeed that the dead man, thank God, had any sins to be lightened, but his long array of good acts will be doubled, and his lofty place be raised yet higher And as for yourself (God lengthen your days!), were it not the custom to administer consolation at times of affliction, I should not have opened my mouth for such a purpose, neither should I have ventured on a word of exhortation, seeing that you know better than I do about the vicissitudes of time, and the ways in which men die. In telling you all this I am like one who 'presents[1] the people of Yabrīn with a sack of sand,' or one who should get up early to bid the ants lay (25) up stores May God preserve you, and give you no more pain, inspire you, and not misguide you, bestow on you blessings, and not afflict you with troubles, increase you with honours, and not burden you with weights, bring you near Him, and not reckon with you too severely! May He show you in my lord Abu P 112 Tāhir and his son what Sa'd Al-'Ashīrah[2] saw in his son—doing the opposite of what was done by Al-Walīd[3] son of Mughīrah! For ye have been blest with

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[1] Yabrīn was a place on the east of Arabia near Bahrain, famed for its sand-heaps, whence the proverb in the text

[2] Sa'd Al-'Ashīrah was the name of a tribe of Madhhij, living in Yemen Ibn Wakshah, one of their priests, was said to have been an early convert to Islam (Sprenger, *Das Leben &c des Muhammad*, III. 459.) In the anthology called *Latā'if Al-Ma'arif* (Bodleian MS) it is given as the name of one of the Prophet's companions, so called because of the number of his family

[3] A contemporary of the Prophet, mentioned by Ibn Hisham among the Prophet's opponents

abundant wealth, and sons to behold it, and when the 'Memorial' came to him, he rejected it, and was not thankful; but you (God preserve you!) are a tree that can produce none but good fruit, and a sea wherein none but pearls of the best colour can grow. 'From the tree grows the sucker,' and[1] 'if a man resemble his (5) father, none can blame him' I need to excuse myself, and proffer ceaseless excuses, for what delayed my letter until now was the fact that since that lad's death there is left me neither a mind to dictate nor an intelligent copyist. To speak truly, I may be reckoned among the destitute Abu Du'ād says[2],

> 'I do not regard scanty means as poverty, but the loss of those of whom one is bereaved is real poverty.'

As for my master Abu 'l-Majd, his occupations, unprofitable as they are, almost deprive him of sleep; and he makes no difference between night and day, his day is like a string that is too short for the occupations that have to be (10) crowded on it, and the bulk thereof are for the benefit of one from whom thanks will never be heard, and from aiding whom no great good is to be gained.

Were it not that you might think my conduct dictated by neglect of duty, I should have bitten a stone, and reckoned silence as gain, since solitude alters the intellect, and diverts the speaker from speaking Albeit I will not deny that it gives distraction, and causes one not to feel the blow, and so eases the mind God never make me like one who does honour till he is onerous, and whose (15) excuse is worse than his crime, and God forbid that I should be like the owner of nine-year-old camels who put up with painful years of famine, and then exchanged them for ewes with dugs of unequal lengths. And what use is the patience of the tiro after the trouble has been got over? I have not hastened, so that I could say I had improvised, as the man who hurries can make his improvisation his excuse,—on the contrary, I have failed in my duty and been neglectful, but rely on my lord's generosity. Consolation between strangers should be administered within three days, but between relations during a year Till the year is out, weeping, in the opinion of Labīd[3], is the law. I indeed might well (20) weep not a year only or a month, but my whole life; and my internal condition is like what an ancient poet says about his camel[4],

> 'Fond of the foremost, each time she sees a caravan, the foremost camels are her companions.'

I beg you will not drive your reed over an answer to this letter, for I know

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[1] Majdānī II 264 [2] Aghānī XVI. 39

[3] See poem XXI in the edition of his poems by Huber

[4] Muhādarāt of Rāghib Al-Ispahānī II 385

so well what is in your mind that I need not give trouble to your hand. God who is Almighty will protect you, and we all are hoping for you and praying for (25) you. And may the rising sun bring you each morning recruited strength in accordance with your merits

LETTER XXXI.

p 113

Congratulation on the birth of a child.

We are delighted with the new arrival, God give him a large share of his name, and the utmost of that after which he is called I have thought of many good omens connected with his birthday, his being born on a *Friday*, the day of assembly, which is an augury of gathering, and is besides a day of feasting and expenditure—God make him therefore free-handed, it is moreover a day of religious observance; may God therefore graciously bring him whither the pious (5) have attained His arrival moreover corresponded with the commencement of the 'days of the old woman[1],' and that is an omen of health and security, for old women are tenderer with infants than girls A rhymer says,

'She[2] dandles her bucket as an old woman dandles a child'

There is a proverb too, 'Tender[3] as an old woman with an infant,' then his arrival coincided with the break-up of winter, and the 'break-up' (*Fisyah*, which means the change from cold to heat, or from a forest into the open plain) is considered a good omen. This is illustrated by the tradition of Kaylah, who (10) came on a visit to the Prophet, and her daughter Hudaybā[4] said to her, 'Fasyah! (deliverance!) your foot shall not cease to be erect;' but the tradition is too long to quote It is fortunate too for one who arrives into this world to meet the spring smiling in his face, bidding him welcome with its roses and its flowers, presenting him with its rich verdure For March and April are the merriest of the months of the year, and smile when time frowns The children of the desert exult in them, marvelling how the wilderness decks itself out in green array, and (15) plucking the mushrooms and other fungi that appear. It is a bad sign for the comer into this world to be met by the two white months, shaking their hoar-frost on him, and sighing with their chilly, soaking winds, and grinning out of their icy mouths, whose pearliness is far from beautiful The time when the

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[1] The old name for seven days at the end of winter.

[2] Mufassal, § 338, author unknown ('Aini, Khizānat al-adab III 571).

[3] Not in the ordinary collections

[4] The tradition is quoted in Al-'Ikd Al-farīd I 103

archer burns his bow, and the shepherd his staff, and the maidservant would wish her head were one of the stones that support the cooking-pot! God be thanked for putting his arrival at the time in which the famine-stricken finds pasture, and in which the young camels ramble about, even those that have pustules in their (20) feet, and in which the flocks eat their fill on all available ground I ought not indeed to congratulate, being a hair in your body, a pebble in the ground you tread; but joy overcame me and made me indiscreet

p. 114

LETTER XXXII.

I exhausted a sheet yesterday urging you to let loose a captive whose liberation would be advantageous. I did not ask you to forgive or condone his offence, and this morning his mother has come here in a great state of grief, asserting that in the small hours of the night a robber broke into the house and (5) slaughtered four hens; she is as much overcome by the loss as if they were hens like those which Alexander told the king of Persia about, laying golden eggs Now an egg-laying hen is to a poor person of more account than a camel that is rich in milk A goat is to a man who has nothing like ʿUlayyān[1] to Kulaib of Wā'il, and the sheep of Maʿbad's mother[2] was in her eyes superior to Zabbā[3], the camel of Abu Du'ād, which was followed by the tribe, when its fetters were loosed, whatever direction it took And perhaps the clucking of this hen was (10) sweeter in the ears of this Christian than the playing of Maʿbad and Al-Gharīd As for his mother, doubtless she accounted the eggs her most valuable capital and her most precious store, a thing to salve her eyes with when they pained, things which she collected one by one, and which she sold for lamp-oil, and she would clean them with warm water. Strange that this thief should not also have stolen some flour, so as to take 'both the bread and the dish;' and even if this Christian had committed a crime, his poultry would not deserve to be killed, for some one[4] says,

(15) 'Punishment falls on the most miserable,'

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[1] The story of Kulaib and his stallion Ghulayyan is often told, e. g. Hamāsah, p 421 The spelling of the name with ʿAin for Ghayn is condemned by Maydāni, who however notices that Abu 'l-ʿAlā spelt it so

[2] Maʿbad's mother was a slave, and her masters were sheep-owners, Aghāni I 21

[3] Aghāni XV 97 In a disastrous year the tribe of Iyād divided into three companies, one of which followed the direction taken by this camel

[4] Imru 'ul-Ḳais, ed Ahlwardt, p. 120

and Al-Nu'mān son of Bashīr[1] says,

'They were poured upon him, but not poured close to truly misery is poured on the most miserable.'

And if the Christian be imprisoned and his poultry slaughtered, then your secretary is likely to lose the price of the poultry, for he is of the same religion as (20) his friend, and an old writer says,

'If 'Ijl[2] avenge on us the fault of others, we avenge on Taim-allāt the fault p 115 of the Banu 'Ijl.'

And the proverb says,

'When[3] the cattle refuse to drink, it is the bull that is hit'

Now if the thief has slaughtered the cock he 'has made away with the cattle, stallion, and all,' but if he have forgotten him, then he will be some comfort and consolation to his owners, since they are sure to admire him more than Bashshār[4] (5) admired his cock, though he says,

'What is it that keeps me awake in spite of the charms of sleep? It is the voice of a creature with a crop dwelling in my house; on his head there is a thing growing like sorrel, which thinks of producing fruit from the end of summer'

If his liberation be too long delayed, his flour may be stolen too, but if you think fit to enquire into the case, do so

LETTER XXXIII. p 116

Addressed to the Kādī.

God forbid that I should make any objection to a sentence, and indeed I am sensible that 'Alī, on whom be peace, took a blanket off his son Al-Hasan, thinking it belonged to the treasury, as well as of many other traditions, among them that Shuraih took his son into custody when his son had gone security for another man, and how Usāmah interceded with the Prophet for Al-Makhzūmiyyah, and was refused Now the bearer of this letter states that he and his (5) son were arrested yesterday, and were confronted with one of the 'two 'Uma-

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[1] A poet of the early days of Islam, of whom an account is given in the Aghānī XIV 119; but the editors of Imru 'ul-Kais make him the author (Ahlwardt, p 121).

[2] Hamāsah, p. 476, Aghānī XVI. 58 Zaid al-khail is said to have been the author.

[3] Aghānī XVIII 138, Jamharat al-amthāl, p 76

[4] The verses occur in Hamāsah, p 823, without an author's name There are several variations Cf Muhādarāt of Rāghib Al-Ispahānī II 397

riyyahs[1],' and the one whose presence is most hateful to a Moslem. And in the case of his son the judgement was carried out, and undoubtedly the same thing happened to Abu Sufyān son of Harb, although he was the chieftain of the Kuraish; and his father escaped by 'the skin of his teeth,' being saved by his old age and a bodily ailment. Now of the two 'Umariyyahs that I have mentioned, one is a feminine robe, and the other is presented by the executioner to one who has erred The poet says,

(10) 'Let not[2] a man be deceived by a lengthy 'Umariyyah of full size upon an inconstant woman'

And he complains of Al-Hakīm,—now Kuraish before Islam set up a member of the Banu Sulaim called Al-Hakīm, who instructed people in manners in the sacred territory, and rebuked the foolish, and he is meant in the verse,

(15) 'Every day[3] I practise my circuit in the marshes, for fear lest Hakīm may reproach me'

And had not the modern Hakīm an article prefixed, according to the believers in transmigration it might well be the same Hakīm.

p 117

LETTER XXXIV.

I am always anxiously expecting news of you, as anxiously as the gazelle looks out for its mother, or one that suffers from drought for the lightning that portends rain. And when I get flash after flash, it produces in me fresh elation, and I ask about you as Dabbah asked after Su'aid[4], and Muhalhil[5] the Tai'ite after (5) Zaid, and I expect intelligence of you from every stranger, and seek it from the students, till some one informed me, after the *rimth*[6] had dried up, and the hot months approached, that you had started for Egypt, then some one else told me at the time when the autumn leaves come out, before the rise of the *Spica*, that he had accompanied you to Baghdad To-day some one else came bringing with him various sorts of gifts, of which the finest was a letter conveying news of your good health, now the confidence that exists between us renders the sending of guarantees unnecessary, and where friendship both in presence and in absence

[1] In the verse cited below, which is also quoted in the L A and T A, an 'Umariyyah is said to be a dyed garment, it was named after 'Umar Ibn 'Ubaidallah Ibn Ma'mar, Aghāni XIV. 106 Perhaps the other sense is a scourge

[2] Quoted in the lexx with the same explanation [3] L A IV 223. [4] Supra, p 59

[5] Probably the father of 'Zaid of the horses' (Aghāni XVI. 50) is meant, a more famous Muhalhil was of another tribe

[6] A herb on which camels browse

exists, there is no need to send perfumes. Albeit I reckon it as medicine and scent, (10) and in my eyes it equals musk that is mixed. Its name (*su'd*) is to my mind ominous of happiness, and may God cause your life to run in the happiest way. And this is how the Arabs do in their augury, they change the words and make them signify what they do not really mean. A poet says[1], 'My comrades said "a hoopoe!" I answered that means hope, to come to us morning and evening.' Now *hope* is not really the root of the word *hoopoe*. The two verses rhyming in *sād* which you quote are not the two about which I enquired, there is a very great difference between them, mine were with *ridf*, and yours without, mine in (15) *Khafīf*, and yours in *Tawīl*,—as different as the directions of Syria and Yemen. Mine were verses of six feet, and yours of eight. They are quite unlike, then mine were to describe the locust and the jerboa, and yours were to describe the brightness of a woman's teeth. Now God Almighty has decreed that calamities should befall all the countries, as he has decreed that they shall befall all mankind. And if any trouble has befallen Damascus, then what country has not suffered? And it is written in the sublime book, 'There is no city but God will destroy it before the Day of Judgement, or else punish it severely. This is written in the (20) Book.'

LETTER XXXV

p. 118

Love is of two sorts, the sound and the faded. That which is sound is from God Almighty, and that which gets obliterated is from the accursed devil. Now He that knows secrets is aware that my affection for you (God preserve your power and exalt your station in good!) if left to itself suffices, and if compared with any other surpasses and outtops it.

I shall not syncopate my affection for you as the first order of *Munsariḥ* is (5) syncopated, nor contract it as the fourth foot of the *Tawīl* is contracted, nor elide it like a trochee, nor make it like a shifting syllable, affected by aphaeresis and chronic complaints. On the contrary, I shall preserve it from alteration as the rhyming syllable is preserved from alteration of vowel or consonant, and I shall maintain its purity and truth The relations between us shall not require to be kept fresh by interchange of presents, for our love is in a well-guarded place, secure against time's ravages I was told that you went to Egypt, yet did not (10) stay there long, only the length of time it takes a bird to sip a drop of water; but

[1] The play on the word in the Arabic is different, the verse is by Abu Hayyah Al-Numairī, and is cited in Zahr al-Ādāb II. 77 with other curious lines

that since then you have made for 'Irāk And I beg to offer you the sweetest salutations with the fragrance of ambergris or of musk.

p. 119

LETTER XXXVI.

Answer to a letter from ABU 'L-HASAN MUHAMMAD *son of* SINĀN *about Kalīlah wa-Dimnah, and a suggestion from the Sultan that the proverbs contained in that book should be put together in an abridgement.*

I felt at the receipt of your letter many forms of pleasure, one from receiving it, and another from hearing it read out, and a third, greater than either, from (5) receiving the news of your good health, and much I marvelled at its language, which was not in rhyme like that of the dark ages[1], nor in prose like that of the vulgar of our own day, but strung together in verse like pearls of the sea, and fragrant as the garden zephyrs in the morning, and the longing of my heart's core for the writer is like that of the pupil of the wakeful eye for sleep; the sun and moon are witness that I speak true; and I repeat my request, and whisper my entreaty, and save your patience by writing so rarely; and have only delayed my answer to this date, because I was unable to do what I am in duty bound to (10) do for God Almighty says[2], 'When ye are greeted, then give a better greeting, or return it,' now I can give no better greeting than yours, and God says[3], 'God will not demand of any soul more than it can do' Do not ascribe my answer to hypocrisy, had I in my youth been able to do what you ask me[4], I should have been compelled to resign such tasks when my locks became white; and perhaps his majesty supposes that I still possess the strength and the endurance which he is accustomed to associate with me; but that is not so; my years have mounted, and my frame has become feeble, my steps have become short, and my temper soured, and the mill[5] that never did more than buzz has now grown idle. The (15) grinding of that mill I used to confine to myself, and make it serve for me only, in the days when it was not damaged, but now time has dealt hardly with it, and nought remains but for it to quit its habitation, and for its place to become desolate And all its utility is gone and ended, and if the rest of its sisters like it depart, my pronunciation will be spoiled, and I shall say *shīn* where I ought to say

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[1] Rhymed prose was the form of speech in which the oracles of the pre-Mohammedan kāhins or sorcerers were delivered The phrase is Mohammed's, Jāhiz, Tibyān I. 112

[2] Koran IV 88

[3] Koran II 286

[4] Perhaps the meaning is rather 'had I been hypocritical' &c

[5] This seems to refer to the loss of a tooth

sīn, and no one will understand what I say: if I say *'asal* is the walk of the wolf, p 120 the hearer will think I said *'ashal*, a word which does not, I think, occur in the language. This 'mill' and its fellows in their successive departures are like the verse recited by Abu Zaid Sa'īd son of Aus[1], 'Mistress of the howdah, turn it back to whence it started; do not move off, or else all the tribe will want to depart too.'

Now if some day any composition of mine reach you, and you find all the *sīns* (5) written *shīns*, you will know the reason, and that the hearer misunderstood me, and wrote down what he heard. Now such a difference of reading does actually occur in a verse quoted in the *Reformed Discourse*, 'Is this a mess of camel with chest-disease, or small-pocked sheep, small-boned, of poor flesh with no hair on its skin?' where the word *kasham* (flesh) occurs in some copies, but *kasam* (distribution) in others. Clearly this is an alteration occasioned by the falling out of the teeth of the reciter.

Your letter may be regarded as one of the Sultan's blessings, but as for (10) Kalīlah wa-Dimnah, I have no copy of the book, my knowledge of it is very imperfect, and I cannot remember that I ever went through it with any one When your valuable letter was brought me I asked for it, and some one brought me a bad copy, and I requested him to read me some of it, and I felt like one who has 'to make bricks without straw[2],' and let not the noble Sultan suppose that I am to be treated in accordance with what occurred in the case of the 'letter of the horse and the mule[3],'—his favour put it into my mind and brought it into my mouth, and made my tongue utter it,—undoubtedly I must obey commands, for (15) obedience to the Sultan is an obligation binding upon all, and especially on persons like myself, for many reasons, the lightest of which is expressed in the verse of Al-A'shā[4],

> 'When a man's guide in his travels is the lance-head, he had best obey the chieftain.'

If I find strength to do it—and strength is far from me—then it will be a case of a miser playing at the arrow game, or a shot without an archer[5] Now this is the time of the *melongena* and the grape, both of which are bad for the brain; (20) the *melongena* is said to undo in a month the work of the *anacardia* in an age; and as for the grape, you probably know the two verses rhyming in *dād*, written

[1] This verse is not apparently in the Nawādir, the second half is quoted by Maydāni II 202.

[2] Maydāni II 18 The proverb literally means 'seizing with nothing to catch hold of'

[3] Name of one of Abu 'l-'Alā's compositions, which, being in the style of books of fables, might make it likely that the author was familiar with the classical fable-book.

[4] *Christian Arabic Poets*, I 387

[5] Maydāni I. 245.

by the Sheikh Abu Ṭārik, about the sour grape, God preserve the author of those two lines! when you addressed me in the way you did I endeavoured to find some allegorical interpretation for the epithet *ajall* (most glorious) applied to me; I thought that possibly you might be comparing me to *jalīl* or 'thatch,' owing to my feebleness, or that the adjective might be derived from the verb *jalla* in the (25) sense of 'to be too small,' used of girls too young for child-bearing, or from *jalla*, p 121 to put on an apron, used of slave-girls, as in the verse, 'By Allah, I know not when I put on my apron whether it be made of a beast's skin or of a man's.' I am of course aware that none of these is really the sense you intended the word to suggest, but you used it in accordance with your good opinion, whereas my glosses (5) are based on the real truth; and each of us has both done and spoken rightly, and your conduct will lead to a permanent recompense, and gratitude which will go far towards being eternal, albeit man is not eternal. A poet says, 'When you reach your country, talk of this, for speech gives both death and eternity,' &c

p 122

LETTER XXXVII.

Your letters come successively, showing that affection is not feigned; and your heart testifies that I too have for you an affection which the trailing blasts cannot obliterate, and the darkness of night cannot hide. And may He who gave us acquaintance and affection add thereunto of His good pleasure a new meeting. Three of your letters have reached me, which I regard as the three stars of the (5) Ram,—I prefer this simile to the three legs of the potstand. Kings are like seas —their pearls are not found on the shore—it requires trouble and coaxing to get at them. Hideous as may be the longest night of winter, still there comes after it the commencement of the dawn, and time is long and ever new, and if it affect any of our princes at all, its effects by God's grace will only be like those of the spring showers, for your clouds give no false show. And your family name is (10) Bārik[1], and that is a good omen, suggesting a cloud bringing copious rain, and events will find in you one who is accustomed to 'drink out of hollows[2],' and the trials that visit you will find you prepared. And I send a salutation, &c.

p 123

LETTER XXXVIII.

I have received your letter, and can only hope that your new moon may become a full one, and that your pond may turn into a sea, and that the shell of

[1] S. Z II 98 is addressed to Abu Tamīm Al-Barki

[2] Maydāni I 307 It refers to one who knows his way about, but the origin of the proverb is rather obscure. Cf supra, p 28, n. 8

your fortune may produce a pearl of rare price, and that the buds of your times may open into the sweetest flower I had been awaiting intelligence from you as the traveller who has lagged behind the caravan asks where his comrades are gone, or the pasture-hunter enquires where the rain has fallen. Were you to appear (5) before the Sultan, you would find him more faithful than the *katā*, and better at pedigrees than Al-Bakrī[1], no doors enclose him, and neither servants nor masters are shut out by the chamberlain. Had you not intended to bid adieu to the Pleiads, and to pay a visit to the rainy South, and been sitting gazing at Canopus with the gaze of a neighbour, not of a stranger, it would have been prudent for you to remain at his court. However, you have made up your mind, and God help you to carry out your plans, and clothe you in the fairest robe of overwhelm- (10) ing bliss I offer you greetings such as she that suffers from drought bestows on the far-off pastures, and your friends here all think of you as the sufferer in Samāwah[2] thinks of her days in Tabālah, and they praise you as the ruined praise their better days

LETTER XXXIX.

p 124

I am writing at the commencement of the month of Sha'ban, called of old the month of blame—and may you never cease to be found fault with for your generosity, and to be envied for your abstinence from faults and follies, and God bring you all the blessings that a month can contain from the new moon to the month's end, and that a day can produce between sunset and sunrise, and that the nights can hold from twilight to dawn, I fancied that ere the Spica rose you would already have made up your mind, and crossed the Euphrates, and slaked (5) your thirst by a sight of Harrān, and returned again to the seashore, and indeed before the centre of 'the Scorpion' appears, you ought most certainly to be near the sounding ocean, or else in the neighbourhood of Prince 'Azīz al-daulah, whose power God increase For one who is in moderate circumstances ought to be near the sea or a prince, especially if the prince be a scholar, and the poor man a man of intelligence and skill And you, dear sir, have 'tasted both time's (10) udders,' and have kindled the *ghadā* and the *agallochum* of travel. If your means are small, they will become easier, for after a year of famine comes a year of abundance, and after the jungle comes the open country. And I offer you greetings which, were they visible, would charm the eyes, and could they be smelt, you would fancy they were perfumed musk.

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[1] Al-Bakrī the genealoger is mentioned by Ibn Kutaibah, p 181.

[2] A place in the desert. Tabālah was proverbial for its abundant vegetation, the Samāwah of Kalb is mentioned as a typical wilderness in S Z. I. 86

p 125

LETTER XL.

Part of a letter to the distinguished Sheikh Abu 'l-Ḥasan *son of* Sinān[1].

The populace, dear friend, have been wagging their tongues with the rumour that you were bent on a visit to the 'Mother of Mercy[2],' on getting a draught of the stinted water, and a glance at the conquering town[3]. And, though they said nothing, they secretly disapproved of your resolution, for there are times and times for the performance of religious duties, and each pilgrimage has its appointed season. He who owes a fast must not discharge his obligation during (5) either of the feasts, and it is also unlawful to commence prayer at either of the chilly times of day, I mean sunrise and sunset. Now your going on pilgrimage this year is as unlawful as fasting during the feast of the end of Ramadān, or the use of perfume by one who has entered on the pilgrim's state Is there such a thing in the records of the Prophet's followers or of their successors as that a man should have left the battle-field in order to visit God's house? Now we had a fancy that the Sultan would not permit your starting on a journey this year, and that he would make his preventing you a cumulative benefit. (10) For you are one of the guardians of the Moslems, one who whets his sword and makes strong his cuirass, and repairs any walls or pinnacles that are insecure; and were it not that the people of Ḥaleb were occupied with their own concerns, they would have been careful to dissuade you from your plan before it became fixed, and to say how much they will miss you before you were parted and gone For whom have your subjects got to guard their bricks and mortar, and to provide rations of dates and water to keep them alive? And on whose opinion shall we rely in making choice of well-woven coats of mail—coats that resemble the skins (15) of leopards? Who shall act as your deputy in the choice of a serpent-like spear, whose bite is followed by death without delay? Or when cuirasses have to be repaired, to serve with arrows as the most powerful assurance of safety—cuirasses that look as though they had been stolen from the sea-monsters? Or the inmates of the quiver, whose notches and wings must be scrutinized, and whose rods and points should be examined by his orders?

Now in these days there has come an announcement that the Sultan has refused you leave, and this is a matter about which *prima facie* I know not what to say, p 126 the ancient house ever since the days of Adam has been visited by pilgrims, nor has there ever been any fear of transference or alteration, nor has any one changed

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[1] Compare Letter XX [2] Meccah. [3] Medinah.

the ancient custom. And in Haleb (which God guard!) there are plenty of garments fit for spoil, and accoutrements which are desirable possessions, and the object of rivalry and all this will at once come to an end by the conclusion of the truce and the return of the Roman arbiter to his throne at Byzantium. And if you would remove your people with you, then the Hijāz is a secluded (5) region which is not liable to the dangers to which we are exposed but if you think of travelling by yourself without your friends, what is the use of that? Let not that happen which the proverb[1] expresses, 'He wrangled till he won.' And if one child were to ask another in the dead of night in a discussion, 'Who is rewarded for staying at home many times what he would be rewarded for going on either pilgrimage?' and the second lad answered, 'Mohammed son of Sa'īd,' his arrow would have fallen near the mark, for your protection of your subjects is a greater duty than either pilgrimage And your son Abu 'l-Ḳāsim is young, and (10) it is surely unlawful to desert him, since he is not able to bear up with ill-fortune. And you must know that the Sultan would not think lightly of such an occasion, and I fear that he may be concerned with the needs of his journey, and require provision, in which case orders will be given to bring you back from your pilgrimage.

If however your object be to get free from harassing occupations, this will be quite feasible without your wearing out any camel, or encountering any strange adventure. This is how your subjects talk of your departure, which looms like (15) a summer cloud. God make whatever is best for you come near you at all times, whether it be to travel or to remain at home. I offer you greetings such as will serve instead of the early showers, and whose fragrance will charm even those that know them not.

LETTER XLI

p 127

If your letters were to come as continuously as rain and as successively as respiration I should always be better pleased with the latter rain than with the former, and like each fresh one better than the last You never write except with some kind intention, and never suggest any but prudent courses either openly or secretly I know not what I am to say of the happiness which has been granted me in my relations with you, concealing my faults, and hiding the flaws which (5) have spoiled me. And after this I do not see why pearl earrings should not be got ready for a cat, or gold girdles be cast for an ape. People might assert that the

[1] Maydānī II 127, the word meaning 'won' might also be rendered 'went on pilgrimage,' and hence the proverb is very happily cited It is not however certain what the proverb originally meant, although the authorities assert that it is to be used of people who are obstinate

porcupine's quills are unfailing shafts, or lances like Dhu 'l-Yazan's. Thankful as I am and grateful for your kindness, I must nevertheless give you some plain advice: by exalting me above my station you set all the tongues to find fault with me,—it (10) may be after a time. For when the shell is broken nothing of any value is found inside, and when the bud bursts no flower of any beauty or any fragrance proceeds from it. God knows that my wood produces no fire, and that my wrists are bare of bracelets; and I have heard how you occupy yourself, and that gives me happy prospects of your future, while it compels me not to trouble you with overmuch correspondence in this life There is no question that our hearts meet in affection, and that our spirits shake hands every day, nay, every hour.

Abu . . . came here laden with gratitude to you, in loads that a camel could (15) not endure, nor a cloud drive, which in fact would be too much for any but the steeds of song, that know no chains and complain not however hard the burden. And had you not already done your utmost for him, and realized the utmost aims of his soul, and given him more than a friend could demand, I should ask you to do him yet more favours and to let fall upon him the curtain of beneficence. However, you have left no room for a request, nor any opportunity for the proudest aspiration to disport itself And he has composed in your honour (20) a poem ending in *r*, in which his two talents natural and acquired have helped each other And I offer you greeting, &c.

p 128

LETTER XLII.

My letters to you used to be as rare as a chamois in the plain, but now they have become as frequent as rooks or gazelles.

> 'Khidāsh has so many gazelles to aim at, that he does not know at which to shoot [1].'

(5) And the remedy for importunacy is what Bashshār says,

> 'There is nothing for an importunate man like a refusal [2]'

Accept from me greetings which, if they were a day, would be the day of 'Arafah [3], and if they were a month, would be the month of Ramaḍān.

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[1] Verse quoted Aghāni XI 74 and Tabari III. 158 [2] Aghāni III 37

[3] See the description of this in Mr. Keane's *Six Months in the Hijāz*

VARIOUS READINGS, CORRIGENDA, AND APPENDIX.

L = Leyden MS (Cod. 1049 Warn)
B = Beyrut edition[1]

v 26 Insert with B after الدهور the words ثم انتقلا من الجدة . الى الشدّة . وكان معهما جماديان. ٩ 8 اقسامه] B سامه 13 العرائض] B العروض, which is probably right 25 الشحم, so B, L السحم, which the rhyme seems to require ١١ 5 هند] supplied from B ١٣ 2 السريح] B الشريح, perhaps rightly ١٦ 18 فط] B and Subḥ ثط, Tadhkirah نط 19 الغرقد] B العرقد ١٧ 5 وحكم] B and Subḥ rightly وحلم, Tadhkirah as text 7 الرقى] read الركى 15 المعرب] B المقرب, Subh المعرب. 21 زلل] read البل ١٨ 10 اخ يوسف] so B L, Ṣubh and Tadhk ليوسف, which is grammatically correct. 21 لعاط] B rightly لعاظ ١٩ 22 حعرته] read حضرته. ٢٠ 6 النسب] B rightly النشب Perhaps this is one of the cases in which the author's pronunciation deceived the scribe. 8 يريع الصوء] Tadhk يروع الجوّ. ٢١ 14 حسن] add with B الشوارب الى. ٢٢ 12 Add with B اقراب at the beginning of the line 19 غريب] B rightly غريب. ٢٥ 17 B rightly فاحسن بما اودمه علىّ الرقّ ٢٧ 2 فرسا] read فرشا ٣١ 6 اوفالا] read اوفا. In the note correct شاهقا for شاهق and الصحاح for الصماح ٣٢ 21 دست] B rightly لست. ٤٥ 18 جعلتها] read جعلته ٤٨ 14 معنا] read معنى ١٥ موضغا] read موصعا. ٤٩ 10 امسا] cod شمسا. ٥٦ 6 سمّى] read سمىّ ٦٥ 3 معنب] B معسب ٧٣ 20 يهدوا] read ىهدءا. ٧٦ 21 فمها] read وسما ٧٧ 4 هدلب] B هدبت 8 الطامر] read الطاهر اثر] read ادرّ. ٧٨ 8 كعواح] read كنواح ٧٩ 15 فلماً] read فلما ٨٠ 1 حق] read حتّى ٩٧ 9 من اوّل من نزلها B [اوّل ملوكها ٩٩ 12 من قبل عشرها B rightly [قبل عشرنها من العرب ١٠٢ 19 من] B ممن ١٠٤ 14 عمر] om B ١٠٥ 3 سيل] read سيل. 4 صح] read ضمح. ١٠٦ 13 اجراؤها] B rightly اجرؤها 15 المقتاد] B rightly المعتاد

[1] Readings of B that are certainly erroneous are not noticed.

۱۰۷ 3 [طل] B طله ‎ 24 [ساب] B rightly ساءب. ‎ 20 [استمراد] read استمرار
23 [ولبت] read ولبست. ‎ ۱۰۹ 22 [السوی] read تسوی. ‎ 5 [فعدب] read فعدب
8 [زُرِنُتُهُ] read زُرْتُتُهُ. ‎ ۱۱۲ 6 [الشاب] read الشاب ‎ ۱۱۰ 20 [ارداه] read ارداه.
۱۱۲ 15 [نشردنی] یشرد نی B, LA. ‎ ۱۱۵ 8 [احلافه] read اطلافه ‎ 21 [مثل] B صَدّ
۱۲۸ 3 [الصباء] read الطباء ‎ ۱۲۵ 3 [یسمع] read تسمع ‎ ۱۱۷ 10 [وطیما] read رطیما.

P. 38, n 9. The proverb is ضربه ضربة ابنة اعدى وبومى, Freytag, *Proverbia Arabum*, II p. 12, no 34. Maydānī's gloss on this proverb is also very meagre if Abu 'l-'Alā really refers to it here, he would seem to have made the maidservant the person who *deals* the blow.

P. 72, n 8 For other verses ascribed to the Jinn, see Ibn 'Arabi, Muhādarāt II 97, 8.

P 80, n 4. The metrical peculiarity of this line is discussed in Hamāsah, p 448, where the same terms are used.

P. 121, n 7 Perhaps Muhallab is written by mistake for Bahrām-Jūr, whose slaughter of an elephant is described by Ibn Kutaibah, p 224

P. ۱۳۱. In Safadi's list the following works are mentioned, which Dhahabi omits:

معجز احمد (Commentary on Mutanabbi)

رساله العصفردن
رساله العفران
رسالة الملائكه
} Included in Dhahabi's دىوان الرسائل

تفسير الأرى
تفسير الهمزة والردف
تفسير شواهد الجمهرة (ثلثة احزاء ولم يتم)
مجد الابصار فى القوافى
دعاء ساعة
الظل الطاهرى
ضوء السقط
دعاء الايّام السبعة
رساله على لسان مَلَك الموت
ظهير العضد نحو ظلم السور
عطاب السور
الرساله الخطبه
مثقال النظم

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٦	10	٣٣	26	٦٠	٢٤ 1
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٨	10	٣٥	17	٦٢	20
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